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ABSTRACT

A project contacted approximately 800 voluntary organizations in northwest England to describe the learning activities in which volunteers take part. Data were collected through mail surveys, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, general observation, structured time observation, and case study. The following were among the findings reported: (1) adults join voluntary organizations to do rather than to learn, but doing seems to require learning activity or even to be learning activity; (2) the formal learning activities were teaching, discussion, training, and assessment and certification; (3) the informal learning activities were practice learning, apprenticeship learning, learning from experience, and learning through social interaction; and (4) although there is little evidence that adults join voluntary activities for reasons of personal development, there is ample evidence that voluntary organization activity of all kinds is a vehicle for the personal development of members. (The document includes 2 figures, 19 tables, and a total of 14 references.)

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Learning in Voluntary Organisations

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with
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UDACE

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Preface

Voluntary organisations play an important part in the life of our society. They meet needs which would be ignored by public or private agencies, and they provide most people, at some stage in their lives, with the opportunity to use talents which might otherwise remain undeveloped. They also help people to learn, directly – by teaching skills and knowledge, and indirectly – by exposing them to new experiences, people and ideas. While some of the things which people learn in this way remain private and personal and some are used only within the organisation, others can provide a springboard into new careers and new lives.

Perhaps a third of all adult learning is undertaken through voluntary organisations. However, while we can describe what happens in the other two-thirds – the public 'educational' institutions, and private education and training bodies – we know little about what is provided through the much more complex and rapidly changing voluntary field.

This poses a problem if we want to develp more and better opportunities for adults to learn new skills for a changing world. The general lack of knowledge of what and how learning takes place in voluntary organisations can create misunderstandings, and opportunities for organisations to work together for mutual advantage can be lost.

To extend understanding and knowledge of this field UDACE commissioned the research reported here, as part of its programme of work on voluntary–statutory relationships in education for adults. We were interested in what kinds of organisations existed, how much and what kinds of learning were taking place, who participated, and whether there were ways in which the opportunities could be improved by collaboration between organisations.

The research, which was commissioned from Lancaster University, examined learning of all kinds in the voluntary sector. It studied three areas of North-West England which we believed were likely to be representative of England and Wales as a whole. The resulting picture sheds a new and important light on the scene, and can, we believe, be valuable to all those concerned with developing and expanding the opportunities for adults to develop themselves, their skills, talents and knowledge.

STEPHEN MCNAIR
Head of Unit

Overview

- The project was concerned with investigating 'learning activity' in voluntary organisations. 'Learning activity', of course, is not synonymous with 'successful learning'.

- The project identified and made contact with approximately 800 voluntary organisations in South Cumbria, Central Manchester and Preston.

- The defining characteristic of voluntary organisations is their variety. It is often difficult to generalise about them. Nevertheless, they are a major phenomenon in our society, involving large numbers of people.

- The project used a range of quantitative and qualitative investigative methodology in order to cope satisfactorily with an elusive and complex research task. Postal surveys, telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, general observation, structured time observation and case-study methodology were brought together as mutual reinforcement to make their contributions.

- Generally, adults join voluntary organisations to *do* rather to *learn*. However, *doing – and development in doing – seems to require learning activity, or even to be learning activity*.

- Unprompted, adults do not normally regard what they are doing in voluntary organisations as 'learning'. Certainly, they do not, and do not wish, to describe it as 'education'.

- After analysis of all its data, the Project proposed the following taxonomy of learning activity in voluntary organisations. It is divided into two: *formal learning activities*, which professional adult educators would not have difficulty in recognising and accepting, and *informal learning activities*, which would perhaps be regarded in professional circles as less easy to identify and less likely to encompass systematic and sequential learning.

Formal Learning Activities	*Informal Learning Activities*
Teaching	Practice Learning
Discussion	Apprenticeship Learning
Training	Learning from Experience
Assessment & Certification	Learning through Social Interaction

- Each of these eight learning activities is, in fact, a label which covers, and generalises about, a host of sub-activities which are described here. However, they may be briefly characterised as follows:

Teaching
This was to be found in groups as well as in one-to-one situations. Talks to groups were not necessarily accompanied by systematic notetaking by individuals. In one-to-one situations there could be formal and focused instruction and demonstration. Teachers and instructors were often 'senior', experienced and knowledgeable fellow members.

Organised Discussion
Just as in formally organised education, 'discussion' can be structured or unstructured, purposeful or purposeless. The project found many examples of group situations which were pre-planned and structured, which could be labelled as 'seminars' or 'workshops' and which contained a high degree of earnest and goal-oriented discussion.

Training
There is plenty of evidence of formal training activities in the voluntary sector, particularly in those organisations concerned with health, welfare and safety. About one third of the organisations contacted in the research project claimed that they were concerned with training.

Assessment and Certification
There are some voluntary organisations (concerned, perhaps, with a sport, a special interest or service to others) in which there are national schemes of assessment and credit, in which much of the time of the organisation is occupied by preparation of members for assessment and in which assessment is carried out, and credit given, by 'senior' members.

Practice Learning
The most obvious generalisation to make about learning activity in voluntary organisations is that it is characterised by practice learning and learning through doing. Many voluntary organisations have some immediate activity, end-product, performance, task or skill which may be practised both during and outside meetings of the organisation. The rationale is doing, preparing for doing and improvement at doing.

Apprenticeship Learning
There may be a fine line to be drawn between one-to-one individual instruction and 'apprenticeship' learning but the project observed the latter as a sub-set of practice learning. There was ongoing activity and groups of adults involved in it. One or more members were more experienced or 'senior' in the activity; others, more 'junior', were more or less informally associated with them – watching, imitating, asking questions, receiving criticism.

Learning from Experience
The project took learning from experience to refer particularly to unexpected learning of skills, abilities and knowledge which are not 'accidental' but are also not consciously intended. They may emanate from the purposes, procedures and structure of the organisation. There were many claims of learning 'how to organise', 'how to be an officer', 'how to be a committee member' (although the 'learning' might have been painful and difficult and could possibly have been made easier by those who already had

the 'experience', if it could have been made available systematically).

Learning through Social Interaction
Members of voluntary organisations claimed frequently to have 'learned about other people' as a result of membership. Voluntary organisations provide a structure of roles and relationships in which inter-personal skills are explored and developed. This is not always the case in an adult education class provided by a statutory agency.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT ARE VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND WHY INVESTIGATE LEARNING ACTIVITY IN THEM?

The chapter begins by noting and putting into context the concerns of professional adult educators in the statutory sector with the participation rates of adults in their classes. Learning activity among adults cannot be equated with attendance at classes in the statutory sector. Adult independent learning, private adult education and adult learning in the non-formal sector are part of the context.

In 1986, UDACE commissioned a seven-month investigation from Keith Percy of the University of Lancaster. It was to map, examine and classify learning activity among adults in voluntary organisations. This chapter explains the focus of the investigation upon 'learning activity' rather than upon 'educational activity', 'successful learning' or 'learning outcomes'. It defines a voluntary organisation, shows how the project arrived at the notion of 'orientation' in order to categorise voluntary organisations and describes the six 'orientations' which are the framework for the fieldwork. It also describes the three areas in which the project's fieldwork took place – South Cumbria (rural), Central Manchester (metropolitan) and Preston (urban).

1.1 Origins of the investigation

Professional workers in the statutory sector of adult and continuing education often talk about participation rates. They are concerned about the number of adults enrolled on their formally organised classes and courses, and about the proportion this number represents of the total adult population which might enrol. Figures of 8%, 12%, 15% – less and more – are variously quoted as the proportion of the national adult population attending classes in the statutory sector in any year. An adult, it has been claimed, has something like a 50% chance of attending a class in the statutory adult education sector during his or her lifetime.

This report aims to put such discussion into a much broader context, and shows, quite conclusively, that learning activity among adults in our society cannot be equated with attendance at formal classes. The very notion of

'participation' rates begs several questions, not least of which is 'participation in what?' Certainly it is not participation in all learning activity. This study is about the incidence of learning activity among adults in voluntary organisations, and studies have yet to be mounted which would map the extent of participation in private and commercial adult education and adult independent learning.

From 1984, UDACE took as one of its original themes for research and development that of 'voluntary/statutory' relationships in adult and continuing education. In 1986, it commissioned the author, based at the University of Lancaster, to conduct a seven-month investigation which would be a basic exploration and charting of 'educational activity' among adults in voluntary organisations. Geographical and, perhaps, botanical metaphors abounded in the brief. The task was:

1. The construction of a 'map' of voluntary organisations and of the defining characteristics of their educational activities.
2. The examination and classification of the kinds of educational activities apparent in voluntary organisations.

Importantly, before the project set foot out of the University of Lancaster, the terminology of 'learning' was substituted for that of 'educational' activities. The concept of 'education' is often understood to be a relatively comprehensive concept encompassing notions of what it is to be 'educated' and of processes which involve a 'teacher'. 'Learning activity' can clearly be 'unsuccessful'; it is possible to argue that 'educating' cannot by definition be unsuccessful – the concept is simply being applied inappropriately. Moreover, the project was emphatically concerned with 'learning *activity*', not with 'successful learning' or the 'outcomes of learning'. It did not have the methodology or the resources to investigate whether adults in voluntary organisations *did* successfully learn or learn and apply particular knowledge, skills and attitudes (although inevitably it picked up a certain quantity of subjective self-reports on these matters). It was concerned with locating and identifying behaviour which could be identified as 'learning activity' and with charting the incidence of that behaviour. It should be noted that, similarly, participation rates in adult classes in the statutory sector are no evidence of learning outcomes among adults.

1.2 What is a voluntary organisation?

The definition of a voluntary organisation in British society is not particularly clear. Normally, such organisations are identified as those in which responsibility for policy, decisions and finances lies with members who give their time and services voluntarily (i.e., they are unpaid). Operationally, the Lancaster Project adopted a pre-existing[1] definition that a voluntary organisation is:

1. An organisation – that is to say, not an informal or *ad hoc* group.
2. Not established by statute or under statutory authority and not directly controlled by statutory authority.
3. Not commercial in the sense of being profit-making or mainly dependent on fees or charges paid by private individuals.

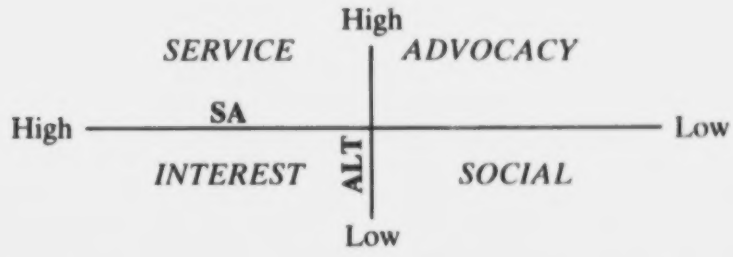
However, in practice, these definitions were sometimes problematic and the project had to use common sense, and to avoid arbitrariness, in their application.

An earlier study of adult learning in voluntary organisations within a broader survey, undertaken by Keith Percy, some years before,[2] had shown the importance of recognising the great variety of voluntary organisations on a large number of dimensions, and the need to devise a satisfactory means of categorising the organisations in a meaningful way. This earlier study constructed an empirically derived categorisation of voluntary organisations. This was refined for the UDACE/Lancaster project into one which used the notion of differences in 'orientation'. An 'orientation' is a cluster of objectives, motivations and tendencies which explain why a voluntary organisation came into existence and why members join it and participate in its activities. The project assumed (correctly, as the empirical work was later to show) that most organisations would have a predominant orientation and that many could legitimately lay claim to two or more orientations. In order to carry out any fieldwork, it was necessary to have a means of sub-dividing organisations; in the event the notion of 'orientation' proved to be a useful tool.

Thus, six orientations were identified as a framework for the classification of voluntary organisations. They were:

Orientation	Typification	Examples
INTEREST	Organisations which are concerned with the pursuit of a hobby, sport, special interest, craft, skill, etc.	Model Railway Society French Circle Keep Fit Club
SERVICE	Organisations concerned with the provision of a service in the health, family, welfare and social service areas. They often function alongside the statutory services.	Age Concern Alcoholics Anonymous Victim Support Scheme
ADVOCACY	Organisations for which the main purpose is political, pressure group, religious or 'social cause' advocacy.	Conservative Party Greenpeace Campaign for Homosexual Equality
SOCIAL	Organisations for which the main rationale is to bring people together, to entertain them, to foster friendships and to reduce isolation.	Old People's Club Mothers' Union
COMMUNITY	Organisations concerned with common issues, developments and activities in a particular area or community.	Community Arts Group Community Care Group Tenants' Association
VOCATIONAL	Organisations of unemployed or employed people concerned with objectives related to particular trades or professions or to provide support in periods of unemployment	Unemployed Workers' Centre Small Business Club Industrial Society

It can be seen that these 'orientations', although they originate from a re-classification of empirically derived categories, do come close to some of the classic social psychological interpretations of the springs of human motivation (e.g. McClelland's n/ach. and n/aff; Maslow's hierarchy of human needs). Building on this association one can generate a framework based on the two axes of (a) needs for achievement/self actualisation; (b) needs for altruism/self esteem/affiliation.



SA = Self actualisation **ALT** = Altruism

1.3 Where was the investigation carried out?

Decisions about the location of fieldwork had to be taken in the light of time and resource available. The project had seven months from project start to delivery of final report; the resource made available the services of three fieldworkers, one full-time and two part-time. It was, therefore, decided to undertake fieldwork in three geographical areas: South Cumbria (rural); Central Manchester (metropolitan); Preston (urban). Among the reasons for the choice of these three areas was the existence at Lancaster of data on voluntary and statutory agencies gathered by another investigation directed by the author in 1979-1980.[2] The three areas chosen gave the necessary spread of locations, and there was no *prima facie* reason why it would not be possible to generalise from findings.

In fact, operational feasibility made it necessary for parts only of South Cumbria and Central Manchester to be included in the study. The section of South Cumbria which was chosen contains some of the largest towns in the area, some relatively isolated high fell areas, a coastal strip of genteel resort and a rural scattering of reasonably prosperous villages and hamlets. It formed a roughly equilateral triangle with Kendal at the apex and Arnside and Kirkby Lonsdale at the bases. The three towns are quite distinct. Kendal is the largest with a population of over 23,000 and is affluent, with low unemployment and excellent communications. Arnside has a population of about 2,000, and is a delightful seaside town with a high proportion of

retired people and some restrained holiday trade. Kirkby Lonsdale is a market town (population c. 1,300), a relatively close-knit community and with poor public transport. Throughout the whole study area the majority of householders possess a car.

To study the whole of Central Manchester was, of course, beyond the capacity of the project. It was decided to concentrate on five electoral districts selected on the basis of rate of unemployment, type of housing stock and domiciliary origins of heads of households and to include as wide a range as possible. From north to south the five selected districts were Crumpsall, Cheetham, Beswick and Clayton, Hulme and Levenshulme.

The total population of the five districts is about 64,600. The rate of unemployment of economically active people varies from 12.6% in one district to 33.9% in another (city average is 17.3%). In one district 6.7% of the population live in accommodation rented from the Council; in another the proportion is 96.1% (city average is 47.1%). 1.7% of the population of one district live in households where the head was born either in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan; in another district the percentage is 23.5% (city average 7.9%). Possession of a car appears to range from about 50% of householders in one district to 83.6% in another. The statistics scarcely hide the evidently Victorian origins of much of the housing stock: in one district 13.4% of householders do not have an inside W.C.; in another, 5.5% of householders do not have exclusive use of a W.C.

The third selected geographical area was Preston, which, for the purposes of the project was defined as the Preston Urban Area and included Chorley, Leyland and some of the villages surrounding Preston. Total population approaches 245,000. The economic profile of the area is characterised by its changing industrial base (decline of coal, cotton and docks) and by the fluctuating fortunes of such large employers as Courtaulds and British Leyland compared with the more stable record of others (e.g. British Aerospace). Significant were the optimistic forecasts and plans in the 1970s for the Central Lancashire New Town, which have since been drastically revised.

Nevertheless, Preston is more prosperous than many parts of the North-West. Slightly more economically active men are in employment (79.7%, compared to 76.7% North-West); more people own their own house, have two or more cars and have more living space per person than the averages for the North-West. Over 25% of heads of household are classified as Social Class III (Manual) and manufacturing is the major source of employment. A higher percentage of the population was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan (3.0%; 1.7% North-West).

Eight hundred and twelve voluntary organisations were identified and listed in the three geographical areas. Table 1 shows how they were initially categorised according to 'orientation'.

Table 1. Voluntary organisations in the three study areas according to orientation

	Study area							
	S. Cumbria		C. Manchester		Preston		Total	
Orientation	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*	*No.*	*%*
INTEREST	129	43.3	15	14.3	221	54.0	365	45.0
SERVICE	58	19.5	42	40.0	112	27.4	212	26.1
ADVOCACY	32	10.7	20	19.0	39	9.5	91	11.2
SOCIAL	34	11.4	12	11.4	21	5.1	67	8.3
COMMUNITY	45	15.1	15	14.3	8	2.1	68	8.4
VOCATIONAL	0	0	1	1.0	8	2.0	9	1.1
	298	100.0	105	100.0	409	100.0	812	100.0

The similarities between South Cumbria and Preston, and the dissimilarity of Central Manchester to the other two areas in the presence of different kinds of voluntary organisations, are immediately apparent. Central Manchester contains more *SERVICE* organisations by far, and more *ADVOCACY* organisations also. The *COMMUNITY* organisations present in South Cumbria (e.g. Womens' Institutes) tended on inspection to be different in nature from those to be found in Central Manchester (e.g. community action). The search undertaken by the Project Officers for groups to be categorised as *VOCATIONAL* was sustained and many-sided; it later seemed to be likely (see discussion of Central Manchester in Chapter 5) that such groups, if they exist, will only come to light with intensive 'on-the-spot' fieldwork.

If the number of voluntary organisations identified by the project in each study area is related to the approximate population of the area, the following relationships show:

	Population	Number of Organisations	Population ÷ Number of Organisations
S. Cumbria	35,000	298	117.4
C. Manchester	64,600	105	615.2
Preston	245,000	409	599.0

The difference between the rural area and the two urban areas stands out starkly. It may tentatively be related to Table 9 in which, for example, more organisations in South Cumbria than in other areas report fewer than 30 members. However, these relationships, such as they are, depend heavily upon the reliability of the project team's methodology in searching out organisations. One can assert, of course, that there may be more, but there will not be fewer, voluntary organisations in the three study areas than are summarised in Table 1.

CHAPTER 2

CASE-STUDIES IN PRESTON

Chapter 2 describes the fieldwork of Phase 1 of the project which was confined to qualitative investigation of six randomly selected voluntary organisations in Preston – a jazz club, a model rail society, a sub-aqua club, an artist's group, a Red Cross branch and an over 60s club. The fieldwork included interviews of over 60 individuals and innovatory use of structured formal observation of the behaviour of around 36 individuals over timed periods.

The six organisations varied greatly in the range of activities carried on but it was clear that in the sub-aqua and Red Cross groups formal training sessions were a major rationale for meeting; in the model rail society it was possible to identify the characteristics of what the project termed 'apprenticeship learning' and in the artists' group there was learning by practice and by discussion of practice. In the over 60s club, it was possible to characterise certain observed behaviour as learning activity; even in the jazz club members appeared able to identify learning gains that resulted from attendance.

Members might be loath to apply the vocabulary of 'learning' to what the project identified as 'learning activities' but they were able to talk about their gains from membership. 'Friendship' was the paramount gain – and 'interest'. Members also talked about gains in 'self-confidence' made from the experience of membership or from assisting in the administration of the organisation.

2.1 Methodology

The start date of the Project was June 1986, which was unfortunate because it was known that July and August would be quiet months for voluntary organisation activity and fieldwork would be largely impossible. Pragmatically, then, the solution was to plan the project in two phases. Phase 1 was to last between June and August. A fieldworker, a postgraduate student, was recruited immediately to carry out a qualitative investigation of a small number of voluntary organisations in Preston. This phase of the investigation would provide direction for the project, serve as a pilot for the concepts and methods to be utilised in Phase 2, and would also be written up as a self-contained study.[3] Phase 2 would be undertaken by two other fieldwor-

kers between September to December and would consist of quantitative and qualitative investigations in South Cumbria and Central Manchester and quantitative work in Preston.

As a prelude to the small number of in-depth studies of voluntary organisations planned for Phase 1 in Preston, five informal hypotheses were developed from the literature, from the earlier work at Lancaster and from the project brief to guide the fieldwork. The hypotheses were subsequently retained throughout the whole project and are discussed in Chapter 6. The five informal hypotheses were that:

1. **In voluntary organisations adults, intentionally or not, do engage in significant learning activities.**
2. **Adults in voluntary organisations have negative attitudes to 'education' and 'learning' and do not include them in their 'definition of the situation'.**
3. **Adults in voluntary organisations are members for reasons of social activity and personal development as well as interest in the objectives of the organisation.**
4. **Working-class men and women, senior citizens and members of ethnic minority groups are more likely to engage in learning in voluntary organisations than in formal adult education.**
5. **Problems of management, finance, accommodation, etc. inhibit adult learning in voluntary organisations.**

Four hundred and thirty five voluntary organisations were identified in Preston using the Central Reference Library's up-to-date listing. At this stage, they were all enumerated and catergorised according to an original draft list of four 'orientations' with which the project was then working. The list of orientations was expanded into six only later in Phase 1. In addition, as far as was possible, organisations were categorised according to regularity of meetings in order to identify those which met weekly and which could more properly be included within the six or seven weeks available for fieldwork. From this base seven organisations were selected (using standard published tables of random numbers)[4] as a stratified sample which was to produce four *INTEREST* orientation voluntary organisations and one from each of the other orientations. In the event, the organisation selected to represent *ADVOCACY* later appeared not to be a voluntary organisation and was rejected. The six organisations selected, therefore, were:

Orientation	**Society**
INTEREST	Jazz Club
	Model Rail Society
	Sub Aqua club
	Artists' group
SERVICE	Red Cross branch
SOCIAL	Over 60s club

It is worth emphasising that this was a *random* selection.

The methodology developed for these Preston case-studies involved attendance at a minimum of six meetings of each organisation and included:

- Interviews of secretaries using a semi-structured schedule.
- Interviews of approximately 10 individual members of each of the six organisations, using a semi structured schedule. This number was approximately 25% of the total membership and, as far as possible, was stratified to include experienced and less experienced members of the organisations.
- Formal observation of the behaviour and interaction of approximately six members of each organisation, for fixed time periods, during meetings. A structured observation schedule was developed and two observers used for each subject.

2.2 Findings: specific

The fieldwork on the six Preston case-studies was the most qualitative and in-depth undertaken during the project and was designed so that, for at least these six organisations, the Project would be assured that it knew what occurred in detail during meetings and had investigated by all the means available the extent and nature of learning activity undertaken. The fieldworker took on the role of participant observer to the extent that he served tea at the over 60s club, dived with the sub-aqua club, ran the line for the model railway society and was swathed in bandages for the Red Cross! However, he did not report modelling for the artists' group or playing trumpet with the jazz club.

It was clear that the main activity in meetings of the sub-aqua club and the Red Cross branch was related to training sessions. In the sub-aqua club one experienced member was training officer and, at the time of the fieldwork, he was responsible for three 20-hour courses (with, roughly, a 50–50 theory/practical content) and a fourth, 35-hour course (roughly one third theory), all running concurrently. Meetings normally fell into three parts – (i) theory lecture given by experienced member; (ii) practical session in swimming pool; (iii) social gathering with discussion of club business. Training courses followed the syllabuses of the British Sub-Aqua Club and members worked their way to BSAC awards at different levels, senior club members being trainers and examiners. There were regular excursions and the fieldworker noted that the interests of members tended to concentrate either on marine archaeology or marine biology and conservation.

Weekly meetings of the Red Cross branch studied also consisted of three parts: (i) lecture/film; (ii) social break; (iii) practical application of theory. Members, of course, often attended public events 'on duty' and so were expected to participate in regular training and up-dating courses. Senior members and/or professional people associated with the branch (medical practitioners, SRNs, etc.) provided training and, as appropriate, examined and certificated performance. One aspect (in a sense) of certification was 'wearing the uniform'.

The fieldworker rated the model rail society very highly as a learning environment. Members were strongly conscious of not wishing to be seen as

'small boys, who had not grown up, playing with trains'. Interest in model railways appeared to be a manifestation of fascination with real railways (particularly steam) in all their complexity, and modelling required critical engineering, electrical and design skills, systematic knowledge of the history of rail and an eye for miniature landscaping. There were no formal training sessions and a meeting consisted throughout of construction and reconstruction of different parts of the lay-out by individuals, pairs or groups and discussions about this work or about 'railway matters'. At any one time the fieldworker could observe several tasks and discussions underway in different parts of the room. The fieldworker noted the central role of older and more experienced members in carrying out 'skilled activity' assisted or observed by less expert and/or younger members. He described the situation as closely akin to 'apprenticeship learning' in which the neophyte fetched tools, held wires and undertook minor tasks, eventually graduating to higher tasks as experience was gained. Learning was by doing, trying out, demonstrating. Successful learning was recognised if a task could be carried out with peer approval.

At meetings of the artists' group there was often a visiting speaker (on specialist techniques or on the work of a particular artist or school). A feature was the annual competitive show in which various cups and prizes were awarded – including some recognising the work of junior members and those who had made special progress. Meetings might include a visit to an art gallery or to a particular location, but otherwise would consist of individuals working with various media and possibly observing, or discussing, the work of others. In the group there were recognised experts in various media.

The jazz club was, of course, a very different situation. Its 'meetings' were public entertainments performed by an invited band. There was no formal membership (although there was a committee), but there was a regular following at performances. Nevertheless, regular attenders were able to identify 'learning gains' to the fieldworker in interviews. What was learned related to recognition of composition, of differences between 'good' and 'bad' performers, of techniques of extemporisation and of 'solutions' to 'problems' in jazz performance. It has to be admitted, however, that the pre-determined, structured observation techniques of the fieldworker were put severely to the test in the noisy and 'primeval' (as described by one interviewee) pub atmosphere of the jazz club.

The over-60s club (representing the 'social' orientation) had a regular weekly afternoon programme of bingo, tea break and dancing and an enthusiastic and regular membership. The fieldworker's observation record shows that most of those attending actively engaged in discussions with others through a large part of the afternoon, but only a minority (18%) were involved in dancing. The structured observation showed that the majority of the behaviour observed (modified to represent the whole session) was at the more passive end of the scale – 'observes' (26%) and 'listens' (27.8%), compared with 'questions' (0%), 'practices' (14.2%) and 'analyses' (0%).

2.3 Findings: general

STRUCTURED OBSERVATION

By its very nature most of the methodology open to the project team (in both Phase 1 and 2 of the fieldwork) was indirect. That is to say, in attempting to study learning activity in voluntary organisations it had to rely on reports by individuals of what happened to them or to other people rather than on direct observation. That is why the Preston Phase 1 study experimented with devising a means of structured observation of the behaviour and interaction of members over timed periods using a hierarchical behaviour schedule. It was both an interesting methodological development and a direct guide to what members actually did in meetings. It was also as objective as it seemed possible to be when using human observers.

In each organisation six members were selected by the fieldworker to represent 'experienced' or 'junior' members of the organisation. The subjects were not informed that they were to be observed. Each subject was observed for three, discrete five-minute periods during a session and, at each 30-second interval, a behaviour item was recorded on a schedule. In fact two observers were used as triangulation; the correspondence of their observations proved to be high. The observation schedule (based on Bloom, 1956)[5] contained ten items, beginning with 'Observes' and 'Listens' and concluding with 'Analyses' and 'Initiates Development'. For each behavioural item there was space for the observer to record whether behaviour was or was not 'dealing with matters related to the organisation'.

Table 2 contains the summation of all the behavioural items recorded expressed as percentages per organisation. It contains the raw data; that is to say, it takes no account of when the behaviour was observed in those organisations (e.g. Red Cross, Sub-Aqua and over-60s) whose meetings fell into distinct different phases during an evening (e.g. lecture, tea break, practice session). It is possible to modify and to weight the data to take these differences into account but in this table the attempt has not been made. To repeat the point, the data in Table 2 is almost the only data in the Project which does not rely upon informants' self-report of their own or other's behaviour.

Table 2 does show considerable differences between the six organisations. It will be seen that all of the behavioural items contained in the schedule are potentially elements of learning activity. In some cases the observer was recording behaviour of an experienced member who was taking the role of the teacher and the behaviour is recorded as 'states' or 'demonstrates'. In such a situation another member or members would be in the role of student (and, therefore, behaviour recorded as 'listens' or 'practises'). 'Teacher' and 'student' also interact (and behaviour is recorded as 'discusses'). Thus, the situation in the sub-aqua training session in the pool is clearly characterised in these scores as 'stating – listening – practising – discussing' and differentiated from the model rail society where there is little 'listening' as such and

no 'stating', but much 'demonstrating – discussing – practising', and from the artists' group where most behaviour is 'practising' with some 'discussing'. What is particularly noticeable (and surprising) is how little of the behaviour which the observers recorded was classified by them as *not* 'dealing with matters relating to the organisation'. Moreover, in these contexts, members did almost no 'recording' (e.g. taking notes), 'questioning' or 'analysing'. The category 'initiates development' was not used at all.

Table 2. Systematic observation of behaviour of individual members of organisations (percentages averaged between two observers)

		Organisation					
Behavioural Item	*	Over 60s	Red Cross	Sub Aqua	Model Rail	Artists	Jazz
Observes	D	25	15.0	17.5	16.0	1.0	24.5
	N	0.2		0.4			3.5
Listens	D	24.5	28.5	19.0	1.2	0.25	43.5
	N	0.6		3.0			1.5
Records	D	7.5	3.0				
	N						
Questions	D	0.4	5.0	1.4		0.2	
	N				1.0		
States	D	6.5	15.5	19.0		5.0	
	N	0.2		1.0			
Practises	D	22.0	16.5	7.5	34.0	61.5	
	N						
Demonstrates	D	3.5	3.0	15.5	15.0	0.25	
	N						
Discusses	D	7.0	12.5	14.0	26.0	25.5	17.0
	N	2.5		1.0	7.0	6.5	9.0
Analysis	D						
	N						
Initiates Development	D						
	N						

***Key:** D = 'Dealing with matters related to the organisation'
N = 'Not dealing with matters related to the organisation'

INTERVIEWS

The interviews conducted by the fieldworker with approximately 25% of the membership of the six organisations (60 interviewees) confirmed the significant differences between the organisations. They also confirmed the hypothesis that whatever the apparent learning activity observed, members did not necessarily recognise it as 'learning'. Particularly in the model rail society and the artists' group, members did not (when asked about ways in which they 'learned' more about the interest with which the organisation was concerned) recognise the extensive practical sessions in which they spent their time as 'learning'. In sub-aqua and Red Cross, this was less the case.

Table 3 shows that members of the sub-aqua club and the Red Cross branch were more likely to identify tuition or training as a reason for attendance. This accords with the presence of formal training sessions and certification. Over all, the organisations' members, unprompted, were more likely to speak in general terms of the 'interest', 'objective' or 'activity' of the

organisation as their reason for attendance and also to lay emphasis on social activity. Table 4 confirms the latter point. In responding to the question on 'Why do you come to this society?', almost half (42.9%) of the responses related to 'friendship.' Most respondents gave several answers to the question – more than one of which might be classified under the same heading. Hence the raw scores and the likelihood that 42.9% represents well over half of the individuals interviewed.

Table 3. Members' interviews – 'Why do you come to the society?'

	Organisation						Totals	
Reason	Over 60s	Red Cross	Sub Aqua	Model Rail	Artists'	Jazz	No.	%
Friendship	14	19	6	13	9	8	73	42.9
Interest		5	7	6	13	22	57	33.5
Imparting Knowledge		1	1		9		11	6.5
Practical Work		2	1	7			10	5.9
Certification		2					2	1.2
Boosts Ego		3		2			5	2.9
Facilities			2	4	2		8	4.7
Quality of Administration			3				3	1.8
Other					1			
							170	100.0

In Table 4 the few responses 'boosts ego', etc. are extended by particular cases which stood out from the interview data. In the Red Cross branch, for example, a member of four years' experience was described – a housewife – who had joined shy, retiring and lacking in experience. During the period of her membership she had gained a variety of certificates and qualified as an instructor. She was now chairing committee meetings. Holding office in an organisation, being a committee member, was noted by interviewees as being a boost to confidence. Sixteen of the 60 had been committee members. Asked what they had gained personally from being on the committee, unprompted eight of them made reference to gains in 'confidence' (five, however, replied 'nothing').

Table 4. Members interviews – 'What do you do when you attend the society?'

	Organisation						Totals	
Activity	Over 60s	Red Cross	Sub Aqua	Model Rail	Artists'	Jazz	No.	%
Socialise	7		7	2	4	9	29	21.0
Pursue Society interest/objective/activity	14	3	12	11	12	11	53	38.4
Receive Tuition/teaching/ training	2	20	8	1	1		32	24.6
Administrate		2	4	1	3	3	13	9.4
Lecture		2	6				8	4.7
							138	100.0

Table 5 shows the responses to a separate question about how interviewees perceived that they found out more about the subject or interest with which the organisation was concerned. The responses were unprompted; the frequent references to 'informal discussion' are indicative; the references in the sub-aqua club and the Red Cross branch to training are confirmatory.

Table 5. Members' interviews – mechanisms by which interviewees found out more about the subject or interest with which the organisation was concerned

	Organisation						Totals	
Mechanism	Over 60s	Red Cross	Sub Aqua	Model Rail	Artists'	Jazz	No.	%
Training/Courses		9	11				20	31.7
Meetings		1				5	6	9.5
Admin. Experience		1					1	1.6
Reading/Literature		1					1	1.6
Films		1					1	1.6
Informal Discussion				5	7	5	17	27.0
Practice				1				
Demonstration			1	3	2		6	9.5
Lecture			1		1		2	3.2
Regular attendance						2	2	3.2
Unknown				4			4	6.3
							63	100.0

It is worth noting that the fieldworker was a qualified teacher and an experienced trainer of teachers; the second observer was also a trained teacher. The fieldwork notes of the former do contain observations on the quality and conditions of formal training, teaching, lecturing that was observed in some organisations. In one organisation a lack of confidence and communication by a lecturer was noted (and a trainee observed that he had not understood the content until it was experienced in practice). In the same organisation reference was made to difficulties over differences in standards between new trainees. In another organisation personal and power conflicts between senior members were believed by interviewees to affect learning situations.

Over 75% of the members interviewed in the six organisations lived within four miles of the club; 52% within two miles. Thirty one per cent travelled with at least one other member. Twenty six per cent of the members were introduced by a friend. Twenty one of the 60 interviewees had attended statutory adult education classes of one sort or another, and 76% of these expressed a preference for learning in a voluntary organisation setting, referring variously to the social environment or non-school atmosphere as reasons for their preference. Some interviewees spoke of voluntary and statutory sectors operating in tandem with formal classes introducing the basis of a subject which a society could later foster.

Twenty four and a half per cent of the interviewees were over 60 (but they were confined to the artists' group and the over-60s club). There were no members from any ethnic minority group. Social class membership of the organisation was assessed through the report of the interviewees (and is,

therefore, highly impressionistic). It can be summarised simplistically as:

	Working class	*Middle class*
Sub-Aqua	Two-thirds	One-third
Red Cross	Two-thirds	One-third
Model Rail	One-half	One-half
Artists'	One-half	One-half
Jazz	?	?
Over-60s	Almost all	

The fieldworker noted that general observation appeared to confirm the conclusion of Elsey[6] that working-class representation was largely Class 3 (Manual and Non-manual) – the 'middle core of society'.

Interviewees were asked 'Do things run smoothly?' in the organisation, to which 26.3% replied that they did not (if the Jazz Club is excluded – all respondents were positive in response – the percentage would be 32%). The largest category of problems was related to personality conflicts and inter-personal relationships, but there were references to problems of management, finance, accommodation and branch autonomy. Over-burdening of the training officers in the sub-aqua club and the Red Cross branch, cost of equipment in the sub-aqua club and accommodation in the model rail society could all be identified as significant issues. The field-worker noted a number of areas where a local authority might assist, but also emphasised the vulnerability of a voluntary organisation's much prized autonomy.

CHAPTER 3

POSTAL SURVEY

The postal survey was the attempt to provide a quantitative back-bone to the investigation. It worked very well, given the disparate nature of the target group and the uncertain nature of the lists of names and addresses used.

Postal questionnaires were distributed in November 1986 to secretaries (or other officers) of 790 voluntary organisations in South Cumbria, Central Manchester and Preston. An effective (i.e. after discarding late returns and 'address not known' returns, etc.) response of 523 (62.2%) was achieved – which was highly satisfactory.

The analysis of the responses showed clearly that a voluntary organisation might lay claim to more than one orientation but that the INTEREST and SERVICE orientations received a roughly equal (50%) quantity of positive responses. Voluntary organisations with different orientations, or different combinations of orientations, were likely to vary over such factors as receipt of external grants, use of volunteers and paid workers, nature of 'users', presence of formal learning activities at meetings (e.g. training, talks or demonstrations, seminars/workshops) and on scales which the project devised such as an 'index of overt learning activity' and a scale of 'high educational outcomes'. Responses to a lengthy list of statements relating to educational outcomes showed high proportions of organisations of all kinds characterising 'some' or 'most' of their membership as 'receiving training', 'developing lasting interests', 'learning how to show other people how to do things'. There were important differences between the geographical areas in which the survey was conducted, with Central Manchester tending to have rather more organisations associating themselves with the COMMUNITY, VOCATIONAL, ADVOCACY and SERVICE orientations than the other areas and also (or hence) to have more formally recognisable, overt group-based learning activities.

3.1 Methodology

In the three selected fieldwork areas, project officers sought to compile comprehensive lists of voluntary organisations. In Preston this was relatively easy. The Central Reference Library provided a listing which was recent and

proved to be reliable. In South Cumbria the Kendal Library provided a list which was older and not comprehensive. It had to be checked and supplemented from a variety of sources (local informants, newspapers, newsletters, notice-boards): the outcome was believed to be satisfactory.

In the five target districts of Central Manchester (see 1.3) methods had to be very different. Basically, the situation was so fluid that any listing appeared to be out-of-date before it was completed. The project officers began with the Manchester Council for Voluntary Services Handbook (the five local libraries had little to add to it) and supplemented this through the other 'conventional' methods used in South Cumbria. Invariably, however, they came to rely on individual 'key' informants (community workers, community education co-ordinators, clergy) who started them off on trails through the networks of new, sometimes *ad hoc* and unbureaucratised, often informal, voluntary organisations that appeared to be much more common in Central Manchester than in South Cumbria or Preston.

In these ways a total listing of 790 voluntary organisations was achieved and questionnaires distributed to them, as detailed in Table 6. (A few organisations which appeared to be sub-groups, or sub-branches, were discarded from the original list of 812.) When a few questionnaires were returned, however, it became clear that the organisation which had returned them did not, after all, meet the definition of a voluntary organisation which the project had adopted and the completed questionnaires had to be discarded.

Table 6. Postal survey: distribution of questionnaires

Area	Total distributed	Total returned
S. Cumbria	280	181
C. Manchester	100	48
Preston	410	294
Totals	790	523

In constructing the postal survey the Project team had the advantage of access to the instruments developed for use with voluntary organisations by the PIE Project in 1979 and 1980 and to detailed analysis of the response to them. It also had the completed detailed fieldwork in Preston and questionnaire progressed through at least five drafts and parts of it were piloted in the Cumbria and Manchester fieldwork. Difficulties were perceived to be:

- The great variety of organisations which would receive the enquiry.
- The range in knowledge and sophistication of the likely respondents.
- The inappropriateness of questionnaire methodology to enquiries into learning activity – particularly if many of the respondents might not recognise the activities on which they were being asked to report as anything to do with learning.

Piloting and drafting failed to remove two or three ambiguities in the questionnaire which caused some data to be discarded subsequently.

There were time and resources for a single reminder and a duplicate questionnaire to be distributed to non-respondents after 18 or 21 days and for a limited number of detailed telephone interviews to be conducted with selected questionnaire respondents. Respondents were asked in the questionnaire if they would 'like to hear more about the report on this enquiry'. Of the 560 respondents, 443 replied 'yes'.

Chronology of postal survey distribution and analysis in 1986 is as follows:

23 October and two days subsequently	Initial questionnaire distributed
17 November and four days subsequently	Reminder distributed to non-respondents
17 November to 10 December	Coding and punching of data
10–21 December	Computer analysis of data using SPSS

Responses received after December 8 were discarded.

3.2 Response rates

The questionnaire was mailed to an individual named as secretary or other office-holder of each voluntary organisation on the mailing list which the project team had compiled. A covering letter asked the recipient to pass on the questionnaire if he or she was no longer qualified to respond on behalf of the organisation.

Bearing in mind the uncertainty of this latter factor, the doubtful accuracy of many of the addresses on lists at the project's disposal and the predicted unfamiliarity of some respondents with this kind of enquiry, the project team projected that a satisfactory response rate would be 60%. In fact, as Table 7 shows, the effective response rate at the cut-off date for analysis (December 8) was a more than satisfactory 66%.

Table 7. Postal survey: overall response rate

Total questionnaires mailed		790
Total questionnaires returned (excluding late returns and questionnaires not usable)		523
Total returned before reminder	463	
Total returned after reminder	60	
EFFECTIVE RESPONSE RATE	523	66.2%
Late returns (not coded)	37	
Not usable	51	
Organisation disbanded	18	
Not known at address	14	
Refusals	8	
Not voluntary organisations	7	
Spoilt	2	
Misunderstanding of 'voluntary'	2	
GROSS RESPONSE RATE	611	77.3%

Table 8 below shows the questionnaire response rate by area. The lower response rate in Central Manchester probably reflects both the uncertain

nature of some of the Manchester addresses and the different nature of many Manchester organisations.

Table 8. Postal survey: response rate by geographical area

	S. Cumbria	C. Manchester	Preston	TOTAL
Total questionnaires mailed	280	100	410	790
Total questionnaires returned (excluding late returns and questionnaires not usable)	181	48	294	523
EFFECTIVE RESPONSE RATE	65%	48%	72%	66%

Not all respondents replied to each question on the questionnaire. Therefore, in what follows, particular regard should be given to missing values.

3.3 Analysis: general characteristics

62.8% of respondents identified their organisation as part of a larger (e.g. regional or national) organisation. This was marginally less likely to be the case in Central Manchester (53.2%) than in South Cumbria (60.6%) or Preston (65.7%) 53.5% of organisations were reported to 'use unpaid volunteers to provide services for members of the public' (proportionately more so in Central Manchester – 73.9% – than in South Cumbria and Preston – 47% and 54% respectively). 30.8% of organisations were reported to have paid employees (defined to include any who worked part-time or received an honorarium, but not those who received expenses only). Again, there were proportionately more organisations in Central Manchester (58.3%) than in South Cumbria (25.4%) and Preston (29.4%) which had paid employees.

The questionnaire attempted to draw a distinction between the 'members' of a voluntary organisation or group and its 'users' ('people who use or benefit from its facilities or services'). 93.7% of organisations were reported to have 'members'; 55.2% were reported to have 'users'. In Central Manchester proportionately more organisations had 'users' (70.5% compared with 50% in South Cumbria and 35.7% in Preston) and fewer had 'members' (80.4% compared with 94.5% in South Cumbria and 95.2% in Preston).

Table 9 summarises number, age range and sex of 'members' and 'users' of organisations and groups, according to the report of the respondent (who was asked questions such as 'approximately how many members does your group or organisation have?'; 'in which age range are your "users" mainly?', etc.). It is important to bear in mind that the information in Table 9 is the summation of unchecked reports of individuals and that the missing values indicate that many respondents felt that they did not have sufficient information to respond.

Table 9. Postal survey: characteristics of 'members' and 'users' of organisations by area

		S. Cumbria		C. Manchester		Preston		Totals	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No	%
Number of 'members'	1–30	59	36.9	8	23.5	64	24.4	131	28.7
	31–60	40	25.0	5	14.7	55	21.0	100	21.9
	61–150	39	24.4	11	32.4	59	22.5	109	23.9
	150+	22	13.8	10	29.4	84	32.1	116	25.4
	Total	160	100.0	34	100.0	262	100.0	456	100.0
Age range of 'members'	Under 18	17	14.1	2	7.7	15	8.7	34	10.7
	18–30	12	9.9	3	11.5	30	17.4	45	14.1
	31–60	65	53.7	15	57.7	105	61.0	185	58.0
	60+	27	22.3	6	23.1	22	12.8	55	17.2
	Total	121	100.0	26	100.0	172	100.0	319	100.0
Sex of 'members'	Male	43	26.2	7	20.0	93	34.8	143	30.7
	Female	60	36.6	10	28.6	71	26.6	141	30.3
	About even	61	37.2	18	51.4	103	38.6	182	39.1
	Total	164	100.0	35	100.0	267	100.0	466	100.0
Number of 'users'	1–30	25	44.6	5	18.5	37	31.1	67	33.2
	31–60	9	16.1	2	7.4	10	8.4	21	10.4
	61–130	8	14.3	9	33.3	19	16.0	36	17.8
	130+	14	25.0	11	40.7	53	45.5	78	38.6
	Total	56	100.0	27	100.0	119	100.0	202	100.0
Age range of 'users'	Under 18	7	18.4	2	12.5	15	17.9	24	17.4
	18–30	3	7.9	3	18.8	22	26.2	28	20.3
	31–60	15	39.5	5	31.3	36	42.9	56	40.6
	60+	13	34.2	6	37.5	11	13.1	30	21.7
	Total	38	100.0	16	100.0	84	100.0	138	100.0
Sex of 'users'	Male	10	14.5	5	16.7	37	27.4	52	22.2
	Female	17	24.6	6	20.0	25	18.5	48	20.5
	About even	42	60.9	19	63.3	73	54.1	134	57.3
	Total	69	100.0	30	100.0	135	100.0	234	100.0

Thus, Table 9 shows that nearly 30% of organisations had 30 members or fewer, that 58% of organisations were reported to have members who were aged mainly 31–60 years and that nearly 40% of organisations were seen to have men and women members in 'about even' proportions. Of those organisations on which the respondent reported, almost 40% claimed to have over 150 'users', 17.4% of these organisations were believed to have 'users' mainly under 18 years (e.g. Pre-School Playgroups) and almost 22% 'users' who were 60 years or over (e.g. Age Concern). Differences between the sub-areas of the investigation included the facts that compared to South Cumbria and Central Manchester organisations in Preston had more male members, fewer members aged 60 years or over, more male 'users', fewer 'users' over 60 years old and smaller groups of 'users'. There was a higher proportion of organisations in South Cumbria which were perceived to have a membership of 30 or fewer and to have a preponderance of female members.

Repondents were asked if they knew how long their organisation had been in existence. Only 170 replied and, of these, 50% claimed to have existed for 20 years or more. Only 24.1% were believed to have existed for less than 10 years (although in Central Manchester 60.3% of organisations were reported as having existed for less than 10 years).

Table 10 shows respondents' answers to a question about their organisation's current sources of finance. It shows that membership subscriptions were a source of finance for 71.3% of responding organisations (but not in Central Manchester, where the percentage was much lower, 35.4%). Fund-raising was a source of finance for over half of the organisations (54.3% for whom responses were made).

A large majority of the organisations responding in Central Manchester (54.2%) referred to donations as a source of finance. A substantially higher proportion of organisations in Central Manchester than in South Cumbria or Preston referred to local authority grants as a source of finance (43.8% compared to 20.4% in Preston and 10.3% in South Cumbria). Other grant aid figures much more in voluntary organisations in Central Manchester (25%) than in Preston (12.9%) and South Cumbria (8.3%). These responses have face validity despite the frequently expressed reluctance of organisations to give information on this issue.

Table 10. Postal survey: sources of finance

Source of Finance	All Cases		South Cumbria		Central Manchester		Preston	
Local Authority Grants	100	19.1	19	10.5	21	43.8	60	20.4
Other External Grants	65	12.4	15	8.3	12	25.0	38	12.9
Donations	214	40.9	72	39.8	26	54.2	116	39.5
Legacies	76	14.5	23	12.7	7	14.6	46	15.6
Fund-raising	284	54.3	111	61.3	21	43.8	152	51.7
Membership Subscriptions	373	71.3	132	72.9	17	35.4	224	76.2
Other	109	20.8	32	17.7	10	20.8	67	22.8

3.4 Analysis: aims of groups and organisations

In a pivotal question, respondents were asked to tick statements which applied to their organisation. The statements were largely derived from the six 'orientations' which had been stipulated as an organising framework for the project. An 'orientation', it will be remembered, could be taken 'to typify a cluster of objectives, motivations and tendencies' associated with a voluntary organisation and its members. Logically, a respondent for an organisation should be able to tick more than one statement, but particular patterns of responses should occur. In the subsequent analysis of the responses to other parts of the survey, the positive responses to the statements in this question were treated as independent variables and the frequencies for other questions calculated accordingly. Interesting patterns certainly did appear, but readers should consider carefully their meaning and validity. It will be noted that the single statement 'we are an educational organisation' was added to this question.

Table 11 reports the positive responses to the various statements (and indicates the orientation from which the statements were originally derived). It should be compared with Table 1, which contained the original allocations to orientations by project officers.

It can be seen that, taking single statements as crude indicators of orientation, *INTEREST* and *SERVICE* statements attract roughly equal responses (just over 50%), but that there is a large gap to *COMMUNITY* (36.3%) and *SOCIAL* (27.2%). The two *VOCATIONAL* statements (if combined) amount only to 14.9% and *ADVOCACY* to 12.2%. It is noteworthy that so many organisations acknowledge *VOCATIONAL* aims, although the project failed originally to identify virtually any organisations in this orientation.

The table does, however, emphasise again the differences between Central Manchester on the one hand and South Cumbria and Preston on the other. In Central Manchester 70.8% of organisations are said to 'provide a *SERVICE* to others' (South Cumbria and Preston, 50.3% and 49.3% respectively). Twice as many organisations in Central Manchester as in South Cumbria and Preston are said to 'represent and/or help the local *COMMUNITY* (62.5%, compared with 35.9% and 32.3% respectively). Even greater differences relate to responses to the statement 'we aim to help unemployed people' (37.5%, compared with 6.1% and 12.2% respectively).

Table 11. Postal survey: aims of groups and organisations by area

		S. Cumbria		C. Manchester		Preston		Total	
Statement	**Orientation**	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
One of our aims is to learn more about a special interest	*INTEREST*	88	48.6	21	43.8	162	55.1	271	51.8
We provide a service to others	*SERVICE*	91	50.3	34	70.8	145	49.3	270	51.6
We represent a particular political/religious/ ecological or other point of view	*ADVOCACY*	22	12.2	10	20.8	32	10.9	64	12.2
We entertain people	*SOCIAL*	53	29.3	10	20.8	79	26.9	142	27.2
We aim to help unemployed people	*VOCATIONAL*	11	6.1	18	37.5	36	12.2	65	12.4
Our main aim is to help members in the area or paid work and employment	*VOCATIONAL*	3	1.7	2	4.2	8	2.7	13	2.5
We represent and/or help the local community	*COMMUNITY*	65	35.9	30	62.5	95	32.3	190	36.3
Our members share a common interest/hobby/ skill/activity	*GENERAL*	149	82.3	26	54.2	232	78.9	407	77.8
We provide help and support for our members	*GENERAL*	73	40.3	29	60.4	149	50.7	251	48.0
We are an educational organisation	*GENERAL*	39	21.5	13	27.1	91	31.0	143	27.5

3.5 Analysis: meetings

The survey shows that voluntary organisations and groups normally meet once a month (36.7%) or once a week (23.0%). There is little variation between the geographical areas of the investigation in this factor.

Table 12 shows the responses to the question 'What happens in meetings/events/occasions which your group/organisation arranges?'. Respondents were given a long list of activities (many of which, *prima facie*, may have 'educational' content) and asked to tick as many as applied. Of all the possibilities, 'discussions' was the one most frequently marked by respondents (for 51.8% of the organisations) and in Central Manchester (72.9%) more so than elsewhere. 'Talks or demonstrations by visiting speakers' was also reported to be a common content of meetings (47.5%). 33.5% of organisations mentioned 'group work', 29.1% training sessions and 25.4% 'individual work'. Only 18.4% referred to 'individual instruction'. Organisations in Central Manchester appeared less likely than groups in South Cumbria and Preston to engage in 'demonstrations', 'rehearsal/practices', 'competitions', 'exhibitions' and 'public performances', and more likely to engage in 'seminars/workshops' and 'administration'.

Table 12. Postal survey: forms of activity in meetings ('What happens in meetings/events/occasions which your group/organisation arranges?')

	All Cases		South Cumbria		Central Manchester		Preston	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Discussions	271	51.8	72	39.8	35	72.9	164	55.8
Talks or demonstrations by visiting speakers	246	47.0	86	47.5	20	41.7	140	47.6
Visits	190	36.3	67	37.0	13	27.1	110	37.4
Group work	175	33.5	61	33.7	15	31.3	99	33.7
Administration	159	30.4	53	29.3	20	41.7	86	29.3
Training Sessions	152	29.1	48	26.5	15	31.3	89	30.3
Production of a Newsletter/other publication	149	28.5	45	24.9	12	25.0	92	31.3
Competitions	149	28.5	57	31.5	4	8.3	88	29.9
Public performances	142	27.2	49	27.1	10	20.8	83	28.2
Films/videos	138	26.4	45	24.9	12	25.0	81	27.6
Individual work	133	25.4	44	24.3	10	20.8	79	26.9
Demonstrations	132	25.2	48	26.5	7	14.6	77	26.2
Exhibitions	126	24.1	46	25.4	7	14.6	73	24.8
Rehearsal/practice sessions	121	23.1	48	26.5	5	10.4	68	23.1
Seminars/workshops	111	21.2	35	19.3	14	29.2	62	21.1
Individual instruction	96	18.4	37	20.4	6	12.5	53	18.0
Other	115	22.0	36	19.9	12	25.0	92	31.3
All	523	100	181	100	48	100	294	100

3.6 Analysis: outcomes of membership

The final question (Table 13) on the survey invited respondents to indicate of how many members of their organisations, in their estimation, a range of statements relating to outcomes of membership were true. The statements were all headed 'Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .', and included a variety of claims and judgements which had appeared in PIE project fieldwork, in the present Preston study and in early South Cumbria fieldwork. Most of the stated outcomes had direct or indirect 'educational' content. In using this table particular care must be taken to note missing values (which in many cases, are no doubt, 'None' responses). Table 13 may be read variously. If one concentrates upon the 'All' column, *all* the members of 45.3% of the organisations are judged to 'learn more about a

particular subject'; *all* the members of 25.4% of the organisations are said to 'receive training'; *all* the members of 17.9% of the organisations are said to 'develop lasting interests'; and *all* the members of 15.6% of the organisations are reported to 'learn how to do things they have never tried before'.

If one looks further at the 'Most' and 'Some' columns, other – quite strong – statements appear to have been made. In only 3.6% of the organisations do *none* of the members 'learn more about a particular subject'. In 74% of the organisations at least some of the members 'receive training'; in only 4.7% of the organisations do *none* of the members 'develop lasting interests'. In 85.8% of the cases at least *some* members are reported to 'learn how to do things they have never tried before'; in 79.5% of the organisations at least *some* members 'learn how to explain things to others' (although in only 25.8% of them are *most* or *all* members reported to do this). Similarly, in 71.2% of cases at least *some* members 'learn how to show other people how to do things' (although in 16.1% of them *most* or *all* members are reported to do this). In 14.2% organisations *all* members are said to 'become more self-confident about their own abilities'; in 31.6% organisations *most* and in 42.6% *some*.

Table 13. Postal survey: outcomes of membership

	Of how many members would you say the statement is true?									
Belong to our organisation means that members . . .	All		Most		Some		None		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Learn more about a particular subject(s)	191	45.3	136	32.2	80	19.0	15	3.6	422	100
Form new friendships	145	32.7	170	38.3	125	28.2	4	0.9	444	100
Receive training	90	25.4	54	15.3	118	33.3	92	26.0	354	100
Increase their interest in the welfare of others	87	22.5	88	22.7	127	32.8	85	22.0	387	100
Lead more active lives	73	19.3	122	32.3	140	37.0	43	11.4	378	100
Develop lasting interests	69	17.9	145	37.7	153	39.7	18	4.7	385	100
Become physically fitter	51	15.9	44	13.7	72	22.4	154	48.0	321	100
Learn how to do things they have never tried before	57	15.6	79	21.6	178	48.6	52	14.2	366	100
Develop useful skills	50	15.0	80	24.0	134	40.2	69	20.7	333	100
Become more self confident about their own abilities	53	14.2	118	31.6	159	42.6	43	11.5	373	100
Become more familiar with committee work	31	8.6	51	14.1	224	61.9	56	15.5	362	100
Learn how to explain things to others	26	7.6	62	18.2	183	53.7	70	20.5	341	100
Become more practical	21	7.0	51	17.0	119	39.7	109	36.3	300	100
Become better at speaking in front of other people	25	7.4	45	13.2	194	57.1	76	22.4	340	100
Become better at organising	18	5.4	39	11.8	204	61.6	70	21.1	331	100
Learn how to show other people how to do things	16	5.0	36	11.1	178	55.1	93	28.8	323	100
Become more likely to get a job or promotion in a job	3	1.0	26	9.1	71	24.7	187	65.2	287	100

Table 14 shows the same data by geographical area. The analysis largely confirms earlier differences between Central Manchester on the one hand and South Cumbria and Preston on the other, and, it may be presumed, relates to the greater presence of service, community and unemployment related voluntary organisations. Compared to the norm, in Central Manchester it is reported more likely that *all* or *most* members of organisations 'increase their interest in the welfare of others' (45.2% norm; 59.0% Manchester); 'develop useful skills' (39%; 48.5%); 'become more self confident about their own abilities' (45.8%; 51.5%); 'become more familiar with committee work' (22.7%; 33.4%); 'learn how to explain things to others' (25.8%; 32.1%); 'become better at organising' 17.2; 32.2%); and 'became more likely to get a job or promotion in a job' (10.1%; 22.2%). On the other hand, it appears that all or *most* members of organisations in Central Manchester are less likely to 'form new friendships' (71.0%; 51.4%). Not all of the above differences are significant (particularly because the numbers in Manchester are small), but the tendencies appear to be consistently in the same direction.

Table 14. Outcomes of membership by area ('all' and 'most' responses combined)

	Of how many members would you say the statement is true?							
Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .	South Cumbria		Central Manchester		Preston		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Learn more about a particular subject(s)	131	79.6	24	68.6	182	77.4	327	77.5
Form new friendships	117	75.5	18	51.4	180	70.9	315	71.0
Receive training	50	41.0	11	37.9	83	40.9	144	40.7
Increase their interest in the welfare of others	63	45.9	23	59.0	89	42.2	175	45.2
Lead more active lives	67	50.7	21	58.4	107	50.9	195	51.6
Develop lasting interests	75	57.7	12	40.0	127	56.5	214	55.6
Become physically fitter	34	30.1	7	25.9	54	29.9	95	29.6
Learn how to do things they have never tried before	51	39.5	13	41.9	72	35.0	136	37.2
Develop useful skills	45	39.8	16	48.5	69	36.9	130	39.0
Become more self confident about their own abilities	55	42.9	17	51.5	99	46.7	171	45.8
Become more familiar with committee work	23	18.7	11	33.4	48	23.3	82	22.7
Learn how to explain things to others	30	25.9	9	32.1	49	24.9	88	25.8
Become more practical	21	20.4	5	19.2	46	26.9	72	24.0
Become better at speaking in front of other people	26	22.4	7	25.0	37	18.9	70	20.6
Become better at organising	20	16.9	9	32.2	28	15.1	57	17.2
Learn how to show other people how to do things	19	17.1	5	18.5	28	15.1	52	16.1
Become more likely to get a job or promotion in a job	5	5.2	6	22.2	18	11.0	29	10.1

3.7 Analysis: variations between organisations according to 'orientation'

Using positive responses to items in the question relating to aims of groups and organisations (see Table 11) as indicators of 'orientation' of a voluntary organisation (see 3.4 above), it was possible to look at overall responses to the questionnaire for variations between organisations with differing 'orientations'. It must be emphasised that this is a relatively unsophisticated and theoretical procedure and can only be regarded as indicative.

As a reminder, the response items (with the 'orientation' with which they have been associated) are reproduced below. For the purposes of this analysis the response item relating to 'Educational' has been left in, although it is not used as an 'orientation' in the sense in which the term has been defined for this study. Empirically it seemed to be impossible to combine the 'Vocational (Unemployed)' responses with the 'Vocational (Employed)' and they are therefore treated separately.

Table 11. (part) Repeated

Statement	Orientation	Number of positive reponses
One of our aims is to learn more about a special interest	*INTEREST*	271
We provide a service to others	*SERVICE*	270
We represent a particular political/religious/ ecological or other point of view	*ADVOCACY*	64
We entertain people	*SOCIAL*	142
We aim to help unemployed	*VOCATIONAL* (unemployed)	65
Our main aim is to help members in the areas of paid work and employment	*VOCATIONAL* (paid work)	13
We represent and/or help the local community	*COMMUNITY*	190
We are an educational organisation	*EDUCATIONAL*	143

On this basis, and without repeating the detailed analysis of data, it can be observed that organisations with the *INTEREST* orientation had marginally smaller memberships (30.1% memberships 30 or below) and relied more on membership subscriptions as sources of finance than any other category of organisation (80.8% compared with norm of 71.3%). More organisations saw their membership as male (32.4%) than female (27.2%).

In the *SERVICE* orientation there were 30.6% organisations which claimed a membership of 150 or more and more organisations which saw their membership as predominantly female (35.1%) than male (25.9%). 'Members and 'users' of service organisations were seen to predominate in the 31–60-year-old age group. These organisations relied heavily on fund-raising as a source of finance (61.5% compared with a norm of 51.7%).

Organisations with the *ADVOCACY* orientation claimed large memberships (32.7% with 150+ members compared with the norm of 25.4%).

Members were emphatically (73%) in the 31–60-year-age group and, of all the orientations, the male/female distribution was seen to be more likely to be even (61.1% compared with norm of 39.1%). 45.5% of advocacy organisations responding regarded their users as in the over 60 age-group (norm was 21.7%). However, the notion of a 'user' may be problematic here.

Of organisations with the *SOCIAL* orientation, 18% regarded their members as mainly 60+ and 22.5% had local authority grants as a source of finance.

In the *VOCATIONAL* orientation, 53.5% of organisations which help unemployed people were reported to have over 150 'users' (norm of 38.6%). These organisations mention more often local authority grants (52.3%; norm of 19.1%); 'other grants' (35.4%; norm of 12.4%); donations (56.9%; norm of 40.9%) and legacies (29.2%; norm of 14.5%). 85.7% of organisations related to work and employment reported to have members 31–60-year-old (norm of 53.7%). 41.7% of them reported their members as predominantly male (norm of 30.7%).

Of organisations with the *COMMUNITY* orientation, 41% reported their membership to be predominantly female (norm of 30.3%).

For reference, Table 15 reports sources of finance by orientation in detail.

Table 15. Postal survey: sources of finance by 'orientation'

		Sources of Finance													
Statement	Orientation	Local authority grants		Other grants		Dona-tions		Legacies		Fund raising		Members subscrip-tions		Other	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
One of our aims is to learn more about a special interest	*INTEREST*	44	16.2	28	10.3	111	41.0	30	11.1	141	52.0	219	80.8	55	20.3
We provide a service to others	*SERVICE*	75	27.8	50	18.5	144	53.3	59	21.9	169	62.6	166	61.5	58	21.5
We represent a particular . . . point of view	*ADVOCACY*	10	15.6	8	12.5	33	51.6	16	25.0	39	60.9	49	76.6	15	23.4
We entertain people	*SOCIAL*	32	22.5	16	11.3	51	35.9	14	9.9	89	62.7	116	81.7	38	26.8
We aim to help unemployed people	*VOCATIONAL* (unemployed)	34	52.3	23	35.4	37	56.9	19	29.2	40	61.5	32	49.2	13	20.0
Our main aim is to help members in the areas of paid work and employment	*VOCATIONAL* (paid work)	3	23.1	1	7.7	2	15.4	3	23.1	6	46.2	9	69.2	4	30.8
We represent and/or help the local community	*COMMUNITY*	61	32.1	36	18.9	105	55.3	35	18.4	127	66.8	113	39.5	37	19.5
	All	100	19.1	65	12.4	214	40.9	76	14.5	284	54.3	373	71.3	109	20.8

Table 16 contains the responses to the question 'What happens in meetings/events/occasions which your group/organisation arranges?' (c.f. Table 12 above) analysed according to orientation. The orientation *VOCATIONAL* (unemployed) tends to stand out as the category in which more organisations lay claim to activities which the project can label more easily as involving 'learning activity' than others. This is the case with 'Discussions', 'Seminars/Workshops', 'Individual Instruction', 'Training Sessions' and 'Group Work'. Social organisations rank lowest on almost all of the activities, although they are markedly more active with 'Competitions' and 'Public Performances'. *ADVOCACY* organisations seem to rely heavily on 'Talks or demonstrations by visiting speakers'. The lower emphasis placed

on 'Administration' by *INTEREST* organisations compared to most of the other orientations is worth noting. Although not contained in Table 16, it is significant what the analysis of organisations responding positively to the statement 'We are an educational organisation' shows that they have higher percentages than any of the orientations for the activities. 'Demonstrations', 'Individual Work', 'Individual Instruction', 'Group Work', 'Visits to other organisations', 'Talks by visiting speakers' and 'Films/videos'.

Table 16. Forms of activity in meetings by 'orientation'

	Orientation											
	INTEREST		*SERVICE*		*ADVOCACY*		*SOCIAL*		*VOCATIONAL* (unemployed)		*VOCATIONAL* (paid work)		*COMMUNITY*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Discussions	149	55.0	166	61.5	47	73.4	95	45.7	52	80.0	10	76.9	125	65.8
Talks or demonstrations by visiting speaker	151	55.7	131	48.5	43	67.2	63	44.4	35	53.8	8	61.5	99	52.1
Visits	113	41.7	97	35.9	27	42.2	87	41.8	25	38.5	5	38.5	81	42.8
Group work	109	40.2	111	41.1	25	39.1	55	26.4	30	46.2	4	30.8	82	43.2
Administration	78	28.8	109	40.4	34	53.1	40	28.2	38	58.5	7	53.8	81	42.6
Training Sessions	96	35.4	97	35.9	23	35.9	43	30.3	32	49.2	6	46.2	76	40.0
Production of a newsletter/ other publications	92	33.9	86	31.9	30	46.9	43	30.3	22	33.8	4	30.8	66	34.7
Competitions	102	37.6	57	21.1	11	17.2	73	35.1	17	26.2	2	15.4	44	23.2
Public performances	88	32.5	76	28.1	19	29.7	85	59.9	14	21.5	1	7.7	54	27.9
Films/videos	83	30.6	78	28.9	23	35.9	46	32.4	19	29.2	4	30.8	63	33.2
Individual work	92	33.9	78	28.9	21	32.8	43	20.7	22	33.8	4	30.8	57	30.0
Demonstrations	89	32.8	67	24.8	15	23.4	55	26.4	13	20.0	3	23.1	45	23.7
Exhibitions	83	30.6	67	24.8	26	40.6	47	22.6	19	29.2	2	15.4	55	28.9
Rehearsal/practice sessions	78	28.8	50	18.5	8	12.5	58	27.9	12	18.5	2	15.4	33	17.4
Seminars/workshops	65	24.0	74	27.4	21	32.8	37	26.1	30	46.2	5	38.5	61	32.1
Individual instruction	63	23.2	58	21.5	11	17.2	35	16.8	20	30.8	4	30.8	46	24.2
Other	47	17.3	60	22.2	17	26.6	23	16.2	15	23.1	2	15.4	38	20.0
All	271	100	270	100	64	100	208	100	65	100	13	100	190	100

The same information can be expressed in numerical form as an 'Index of overt learning activity'. If the five activities of discussions, talks or demonstrations by visiting speaker, seminars/workshops, individual instruction, training sessions, are taken as the constituent elements of such an index, the percentage scores for each activity can be compared with the average for the whole sample. The five values derived can then be summated, and the ranking in Figure 1 occurs:

VOCATIONAL (unemployed)	+84.5
EDUCATIONAL	+84.2
ADVOCACY	+61.4
COMMUNITY	+45.1
SERVICE	+26.6
INTEREST	+26.4
SOCIAL	− 3.2

Figure 1. Index of overt learning activity

A final element of the computer analysis was to take the responses to question 11 ('outcomes of membership') and to identify four statements as indicators of 'high educational outcomes'. The statements were

[*Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .*]
Learn more about a particular subject.
Learn how to explain things to others.
Learn how to do things they have never tried before.
Learn how to show other people how to do things.

A positive 'all' or 'most' response to at least three of these four statements was taken to identify organisations 'with high educational outcomes'. Forty eight voluntary organisations were so identified.

Table 17 analyses organisations with 'high educational outcomes' according to orientation. It shows that such organisations are spread across the orientations in roughly even proportions, apart from *INTEREST*, where these organisations are marginally more highly represented.

Table 17. Organisations with high educational outcomes* by aims of organisations

		Organisations with high educational outcomes		Total	
Statement	Orientation	No.	%	No.	%
One of our aims is to learn about a special interest	*INTEREST*	34	70.8	271	51.8
We provide a service to others	*SERVICE*	28	58.3	270	51.6
We represent a particular political/religious/ ecological or other point of view	*ADVOCACY*	6	12.5	64	12.2
We entertain people	*SOCIAL*	17	35.4	142	27.2
We aim to help unemployed people	*VOCATIONAL* (unemployed)	7	14.6	65	12.4
Our main aim is to help members in the areas of paid work and employment	*VOCATIONAL* (paid work)	2	4.2	13	2.5
We represent and/or help the local community	*COMMUNITY*	18	37.5	190	36.3
Our members share a common interest/ hobby/skill/activity	*GENERAL*	42	87.5	407	77.8
We provide help and support for our members	*GENERAL*	30	62.5	251	48.0
We are an educational organisation	*GENERAL*	24	50.0	143	27.3
Totals		48	100	523	100

*Defined as indicating 'all' or 'most' to 3 out of 4 statements relating to outcomes of membership. Statements are [*Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .*]
1. Learn more about a particular subject
2. Learn how to explain things to others
3. Learn how to do things they have never tried before
4. Learn how to show other people how to do things

Figure 2 shows another way of representing the same information, by representing the organisation with 'high educational outcomes' as percentages of the organisations in each orientation. Organisations identifying themselves as 'educational organisations' are also included.

	%
EDUCATION	16.7
INTEREST	12.5
SOCIAL	11.9
VOCATIONAL (unemployed)	10.7
SERVICE	10.3
COMMUNITY	9.4
ADVOCACY	9.3

Figure 2. Organisations with 'high educational outcomes' as a percentage of each orientation

The relationships between the rankings in Figures 1 and 2 give rise to some interesting interpretations but, given the nature of the data and the analyses, it would be premature to attach too much weight to them.

CHAPTER 4

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

The telephone interviews (n = 20, selected on strict criteria from volunteers in the postal survey) were a fascinating and important extension to the postal responses. Content of the interviews was related to the responses about learning activity and educational outcomes in the survey. The interviews succeeded in penetrating the meaning of the responses and showing how multi-layered and multi-faceted it could be.

In discussing different kinds of activity taking place in organisations, respondents showed, often inadvertently, the variety of situations which might have learning content. 'Discussions' might be more or less structured, involving role-play, group therapy, peer assessment; 'workshops' might involve a variety of input, outside experts and possibly participation by non-members; 'training' or 'coaching' (a distinction could be made) might lead to certification. Importantly, if the role of teacher or trainer was recognised, it was likely to be carried out by an ordinary member – perhaps more talented or experienced, but not necessarily a professional. In voluntary organisations, the role of teacher was de-mystified – 'everyone a teacher and everyone a learner' was common (but perhaps not consciously put into words) in many organisations. Respondents gave many examples of skills acquired through membership – publicity, handling finances, public speaking, secretarial, managerial, officer roles. They talked with conviction about members' growth in self-confidence.

4.1 Methodology

For all the fascination of its tables, frequencies, cross tabulations and statistical patterns, the computer analysis of the postal survey – successful though it was in providing the main outlines and contours of a map of learning activity in voluntary organisations – could not provide qualitative insights or depth impressions into the human interactions and processes which made up voluntary organisation activity. Indeed, there are levels at which 'understanding' of the 'meaning' of some of the data is not possible without further reference to its originators, the respondents themselves. The crucial issue was to test whether the meanings which respondents attached to the vocabulary of the questionnaire matched, for the most part, what was

intended by the project. To continue the mapping metaphor, what was needed was a ground expedition to check the contours and to fill in the detail of a new computer-generated map of a territory which had hitherto been largely unexplored.

Telephone follow-up interviews were, therefore, carried out with a small sample of postal survey respondents. All questionnaire returns in which respondents had replied positively to at least four of five items on question 10 ('What happens in meetings/events/occasions which your group/ organisation arranges?') were isolated. The five items were:

- Individual instruction
- Discussions
- Seminars/workshops
- Talks or demonstrations by visiting speakers
- Training sessions

These items were selected as those most likely to be associated with formal educational activity, with organised teaching and learning. Therefore, the organisations chosen were not necessarily going to be those characterised elsewhere in this report as providing a context for 'apprenticeship' or 'practice' learning. From the sub-sample, those who had provided names and telephone numbers were sifted.

In this way, a sample of c.60 organisations emerged. The telephone interviews could only begin at the end of November and could take place only over a two to three-week period at the time of other analysis, fieldwork and report-writing. Therefore, there was no opportunity of interviewing all 60. A target of 24 telephone interviews was set; in the event 20 were accomplished. The 24 were chosen to represent the spread of orientations and study areas. The 20 interviews carried out consisted of 7 in South Cumbria; 5 in Central Manchester; and 8 in Preston.

The organisations interviewed were as follows, by orientation:

INTEREST

Ski Club
Keep Fit Association
Film Association
Judo Club
Homeopathic Group
Rifle Club
Flower Club
Barbershop Harmony Club
Drama Group

COMMUNITY/SOCIAL

Community Association
Community Settlement

SERVICE

Gingerbread Group
Birth Information Centre
Victim Support Scheme
Disabled Drivers' Association
Mountain Search and Rescue Association

ADVOCACY

Baha'i Assembly
Campaign for Homosexual Equality (local group)
Anti-Apartheid Group
Child Welfare Group

Telephone interviews lasted between fifteen minutes and one hour. The interviewer worked from the completed questionnaire and largely asked respondents to amplify answers to questions 5 (aims of group or organisation), 10 (forms of activity in meetings) and 11 (outcomes of membership). No respondent refused to be interviewed. Interviewers took notes as the interview progressed. The first interview conducted by each interviewer was taped and used in a training and standardisation session.

4.2 Findings

The over-riding impressions derived from the telephone interviews were (i) how successful they were in significantly developing and extending the responses to the postal survey. The questionnaire ticks convey little compared to the lengthy descriptions and expositions of the enthusiasts who talked to the interviewers on the telephone; (ii) how multi-layered and many-faceted was the learning activity to be found in the organisations in which the interviews were conducted.

Actually, only seven of the respondents from the 20 organisations made a positive response on the questionnaire to the statement 'We are an educational organisation' – and three of these were from the four *ADVOCACY* organisations. As the Anti-Apartheid Group Secretary said, 'We aim – and this is national policy – to educate people about what is *really* happening in South Africa'. In the telephone interviews, more of the respondents was ready to turn to a vocabulary of 'education' and 'learning' to describe the organisation's activity. Yet it was possible to identify different notions of 'educating' in what the respondents said. With the organisations which advocated a cause, 'educating' came close to 'persuading', 'informing', 'convincing', even 'converting' the public, and was not necessarily concerned with classroom situations. Some were less urgent than others; the Baha'is were most gentle in their approach. As their informant put it, 'Education plays a large part in our organisation; it's a lifelong thing. Once you have a literate population, which is one of our aims, everyone can read the scriptures for themselves'.

With one or two organisations, being an educational organisation meant putting members through a rigorous course of training. This was the case because the lives and/or well-being of the public depended on members' performance; the Mountain Search and Rescue Team and the Victim Support Group were instances. In several other organisations, pursuing the interest meant 'learning' more about it, but – as the respondent from the Rifle Club put it – 'I don't mean this in any formal sense, but members do have the opportunity to learn things, like technique, by means of coaching and there is quite a history to the sport which some members find interesting'.

The interviewers took pains to discuss at length each informant's responses on the forms of activity which took place at meetings of their organisations. Here we began to discern the varieties of learning activity which we were

probing. On 'discussions', for example, which many organisations identified as one of their activities, there was a range from the structured to the unstructured. In the victim support scheme training programme, discussions were a crucial element of mutual support, therapy and self-assessment. Newly-trained volunteers met with others to discuss their initial experience in the field: 'We encourage volunteers to talk about the visits they make – they *need* to talk.' The drama group always held a discussion evening before beginning to rehearse a new play to explore together what the play was about and the nuances of each character. They learnt from each other's interpretation: 'We talk about the characters first and work out their backgrounds – get everyone's opinions.' For the Mountain Search and Rescue Team even apparently unstructured discussion had a hidden agenda. In these, the leaders (especially the Training Officer) would be assessing personalities and watching out for particular attitudes. A quiz was organised for new entrants; it was essentially a learning tool: 'One of the questions is always concerning where individual pieces of equipment are kept. It's essential for everyone to know. Also it's necessary for team members to know how to pack up the Land Rovers as well as learning what each piece of equipment is for.' In the case of the Disabled Drivers' Association, there were regular 'discussions', but these varied in content, from planning initiatives to exploring particular concerns. From another organisation, the informant admitted 'Well, we gossip really.'

Several of the informants readily distinguished 'group work' from 'discussions', although the former sometime shaded into another item: 'seminar/workshops'. For the Anti-Apartheid Group, group work meant action ('At the moment we are working together every Saturday to picket outside . . . (a shop) collecting signatures for a petition asking the store not to sell goods from South Africa'), but also learning by doing (they always had *post mortems* at meetings after events or projects 'especially to see if we can learn by any mistakes'). By 'group work' several organisations meant practical work in groups. The drama group held occasional 'improvisation evenings' – sometimes with members of other drama societies – and this helped to develop skills. The Rifle Club also referred to practice sessions in which teams (sometimes rival teams) shoot together and compare tactics. For the Mountain Search and Rescue Team there were group sessions 'usually a specific skill exercise taken by a member, or occasionally a visitor'. Group work, mainly based on discussions, was described by the community settlement ('We have a lot of group work here, which we try not to make too formal'), in particular a 'good women's group', working on health issues. Indeed, the informant stressed that such groups were the only way in which people would come to the settlement to learn: 'We feel the setting has to be right. Local women are very interested indeed in these sorts of topics but they would only come *here* to learn about them, with people they know. They wouldn't sign up for a more formal presentation on the same topic.' The Homeopathic Group similarly described regular small self-help groups to consider various remedies: 'Groups help as it's difficult to ask questions in big meetings. But once the ice is broken in small groups lots of things come up.'

By 'seminars' or 'workshops' (usually the latter) informants normally meant a one-off session advertised to deal with a particular knowledge or skill area

probably (but not always) involving participation by members and variety of input. The disabled drivers, for example, ran events for new members to give practical help and demonstrations of aids for cars, car adaptation, costs and driver training. The community settlement described workshops for parents on the value of play; the respondent from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality outlined regional seminars and workshops run on such practical topics as publicity and newsletters. The Child Welfare Group ran workshops for members and the public (usually involving a talk, a film or slide presentation and discussion) on a central theme on which they wanted to get their views across. Professionals (i.e. doctors, nurses, etc.) sometimes attended. The respondents from the Victim Support Scheme described at length practical workshops for volunteers which were concerned with inter-personal skill development and self-knowledge.

Those respondents who referred to 'training sessions' meant by 'training', generally speaking, something like 'specific teaching for the development of higher levels of achievement or performance'. Training was largely for members, although the Child Welfare Group did contribute to external training courses – for example, to nurse pediatric training. With regard to internal training, in some cases it was a question of skill development for the more committed. The informants from the Rifle and Judo Clubs drew distinctions between 'training' and 'coaching'. 'Training' was to get rid of people's bad habits, while 'coaching' was given to raise performance before a competition or demonstration. The Drama Group had 'learning evenings' and some members joined the group specifically to learn about technical matters, to be trained to do the lighting, etc. In the Flower Club there was something of a distinction between the general members, the aspirant demonstrators and the even more aspirant judges/speakers. Would-be demonstrators/judges/speakers received regular training and went forward to various levels of national tests and examinations. Our informant was critical of the absence of guidelines on the appropriate training for these national tests.

The interview with the informant from the Flower Club gave us some insight into the genesis of special interest voluntary organisations. The Flower Club began with a couple of activists who attended evening classes, wanted to join a club but could not because of the long waiting list, so started one themselves. Our informant, one of the two founders, developed her knowledge and skills partly through evening classes but also through self-teaching. She involved her husband who found he had considerable teaching skills (and, indeed, has subsequently appeared on television to demonstrate flower arrangement). Between them, they found out what they needed to know. As the informant said 'It's amazing how one acquires knowledge. Now there's lots and lots of books and knowledge is so much easier to acquire.'

Certainly, these telephone interviews tended to de-mystify the role of teacher. Teachers were not normally professionals or trained as teachers; they were members – perhaps more 'senior' or experienced members, perhaps members with some special expertise from their jobs or other walks of life, but members all the same. In the Barbershop Harmony Club there was reference to teaching tapes with which members worked at home;

otherwise, in these organisations the training sources were the members themselves. In some, members' skills were externally validated (Rifle Club, Judo Club, Flower Club) and those higher in the hierarchy demonstrated their skills to their juniors. In others, there was a form of 'cascade' learning – some members attended a seminar, a specialised learning event or developed a skill and then, in effect, returned to the organisation and passed it on to other interested members. In the Barbershop Harmony Club long-standing members/section leaders might attend a weekend event in which American singers were present. They would return to their club and pass on newly acquired singing techniques or judging skills. In the Homeopathy Group pyramid training appeared to take place. The Chairman instructed committee members on particular remedies and approaches, and committee members then took their own group of members and passed on what they had learned. In the Victim Support Scheme members of the committee took turns (in twos) at organising the training sessions so that there would be a variety of content.

For the Baha'is, it seemed, there was a continual process of watching for 'leaders' who, after 'more specialised training' would be able to instruct and to guide others. 'We get to know each other so well that it is easy to spot the leader amongst us.' In the Mountain Search and Rescue Team there was, of course, a certain element of 'survival of the fittest'. The leaders were those who were both physically able and experienced in the work and tended to be on the committee. Within the committee the various specialist roles were allocated, including that of training officer. In their hands lay the compulsory induction and training which turned a volunteer into an active member. Achievement was criterion-referenced. 'If someone is not a quick learner in one particular skill he will be given additional training in this before becoming a full team member. It is up to the training officer and the committee as to *when* a volunteer becomes a full member of the team. We are dealing in lives so naturally we have to be cautious and make sure he is ready to play his part as a team member in what is often a highly stressful situation . . . (and to) acknowledge and accept the chain of command.'

The remainder of the interviews were concerned largely with question 11 on the postal survey, the question which had asked informants to respond to a list of 17 statements and assess to what extent they applied to the membership of their organisation. In the telephone interviews the respondents amplified their answers in a most interesting fashion. For example, they gave us many examples of ways in which their members had been able to 'learn how to do things they have never tried before'. In the Anti-Apartheid Group 'Members are often keen enough to try different things. For example, a lady had just volunteered to become treasurer, yet she's having to learn from scratch as she's never had any previous experience.' In the Campaign for Homosexual Equality Group 'A lot of members will never have had to organise the design and printing of posters before, or writing letters to MPs and to newspapers locally.' In the Disabled Drivers' Association members learned to drive for the first time. They had just appointed a transport officer and she had never done anything like this before. Several members 'who said they could not write' were contributing to a newsletter. The Community Association gave us several examples of skills which members had acquired through community action and commun-

ity projects. One project had involved a 64-year-old member in learning how to use a word processor. Previously she had not even known how to type.

Similarly, respondents illustrated how members become familiar with committee work. As far as the Rifle Club was concerned, 'People don't automatically think of this aspect when they think of a rifle club but it's extremely important because the committee includes all those people who organise the postal shoots.' The secretary of the Child Welfare Group described how she had never been a committee secretary before but had taught herself to take minutes, gradually realising how to disregard irrelevancies and to record central issues and decisions.

Associated with this, informants gave us examples of how members had 'become better at speaking in front of other people'. To the advocacy organisations, this seemed particularly important. The Baha'is 'helped people in public speaking' through training. In the Anti-Apartheid Group 'We encourage people to give talks to our group as this prepares them for perhaps taking an active part in a larger group.' Our informant from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality reported that many members disliked speaking before others but it was an important skill. 'I find you get better the more you do . . . it's just practice and believing in yourself and the cause.'

We were surprised how much administrative work and organising seemed to be involved in voluntary organisations. Many respondents described how members, particularly committee members, had to 'become better at organising' – 'They are bound to if they are going to get satisfaction' (Child Welfare Group). In the Mountain Search and Rescue Team 'There is quite a load of administrative work and we apportion it out in sections – it's essential that all members *do* become better at organising. That's the name of the game with us.' The Baha'is saw virtue in over-administration 'We do tend to over-administer so that if a member moves on to a larger assembly he or she will be well-versed in the administration and at some time will be able to play a larger role if required.' For the Anti-Apartheid Group 'We all learn how to organise successful peaceful pickets and the co-operation required with the police and the public.' Perhaps, most importantly (as the informant from the Disabled Drivers' Association put it) 'members certainly become better at organising themselves'.

The informant from the Campaign for Homosexual Equality emphasised that to 'learn how to explain things to others' was a crucial skill in his organisation. It was part of educating the public: 'It's a question of explaining the campaign to other people who might at first be quite hostile but I have learned that this hostility is based on fear.' In other organisations which claimed to develop some members' skills of exposition and persuasion there was still room for the non-communicator. 'We are quite happy to have members who just sing' (Barbershop Harmony Club). 'Our leaders are trained . . . (in exposition) but we also need to encourage the man who has skills to offer but cannot communicate easily to play his part . . . we end up teaching people how to talk effectively about their skills to others even if, in a number of cases, they are basically shy' (Mountain Search and Rescue Team).

Our informants were prepared to expand upon their positive responses to the notion that members 'become more confident about their own abilities through membership. In most cases they seemed to be saying that developments in a skill or interest tended to manifest themselves in more generalised personal development and self confidence – 'You can see individuals' confidence growing daily' (Rifle Club); 'You can see the transformation in some members' (Barbershop Harmony Club); 'Members tend to become more self confident, more self-assertive if you like' (Campaign for Homosexual Equality). In the community settlement, growth in confidence was a matter of process: 'I think the way we work here is important, each with our own range of skills but working rather as a co-operative for the good of the centre.' In the Victim Support Scheme confidence was an outcome of self-knowledge, of the training programme successfully undertaken and of the experience itself – 'Knocking on doors takes a lot of bravery ... (and there have been) remarkable changes in people.' The Mountain Search and Rescue team depended for safety on members' self-confidence. It was necessary to be confident enough to admit one's own deficiencies or unpreparedness. 'We aim to teach people self-confidence, based on enhancing their abilities ... we also preach self-discipline. If a person is *not* fit to join a search or rescue then he must say so, otherwise it means we may have another casualty on our hands if he can't keep going.'

The informant from the Flower Club talked about the need to maintain the self-confidence of members, particularly novices, when learning, and of the teaching methods which her husband had evolved to do this. 'He won't *show* them how to do things – he throws them in at the deep end.' There was the 'three-point rule' (each week he gave them three things to remember and to improve on before the following week) but 'There are no heavy rules. The principles of design are picked up along the way.' If a design was bad he would tell them, said his wife, 'this is a load of rubbish', but would then pick out the good points. She concluded 'He knocks them down to build them up again.'

CHAPTER 5

CASE STUDIES IN SOUTH CUMBRIA AND CENTRAL MANCHESTER

Eight case-studies of voluntary organisations in South Cumbria and eleven in Central Manchester were carried out to provide material comparable to that gathered in Preston and reported in Chapter 2. The methods used were interviews, a more subjective reporting of observation and limited application of flashcards containing statements which were later to be developed into those used in the postal survey (Chapter 3). Seven case-studies are treated at length in this chapter – natural history, philatelic and dramatic societies from South Cumbria and Asian Family History, Community Computing, Community Care groups and a Jewish Blind Society from Central Manchester. The remainder of the case-studies are summarised towards the end of the chapter.

The voluntary organisations in South Cumbria had stable and sometimes large memberships and had often been in existence for decades. In the organisations investigated in Central Manchester, one was struck by their variety, fluidity, dependence upon uncertain finance and upon the efforts of a few activists, and by the difficulties created by the surrounding economic, social and environmental conditions. The case-studies gave many examples of claims to learning through social interaction, learning about 'how to get on with people', 'being clubbable', learning informally, learning how to be mutually supportive and 'about other people'. The analysis of responses to the flash-cards showed great emphasis on 'making friends' as a rationale for membership, but also claims to have learned 'about a particular subject' and 'becoming better at organising things'.

5.1 Methodology

Case-studies in South Cumbria and Central Manchester were carried out between September and November 1986, and built upon the experience of the case-studies carried out in Preston, which were described in Chapter Two. The main purpose was, of course, to examine whether learning activity in voluntary organisations varied in rural and metropolitan areas compared

with urban. A subsidiary purpose was to 'fill in the gaps' left by the Preston study – to look at other interest, service and advocacy organisations but, especially, to take vocational and community organisations as case-studies.

The methods of listing voluntary organisations in South Cumbria and Central Manchester were described in 3.1. In South Cumbria a formal procedure was then followed in choosing and contacting the organisations. The list was enumerated according to the six orientations and eight organisations selected using a table of random numbers. The selected organisations were:

INTEREST	Amateur Dramatic Society
	Philatelic Society
	Natural Nistory Society
SERVICE	Oxfam Group
SOCIAL	Lions Group
	Soroptomists Group
ADVOCACY	Christian Literature Society
COMMUNITY/SERVICE	Pre-School Playgroup

No organisation fitted the criteria of the vocational orientation.

The secretary (or other officer) of the chosen organisation was then contacted by telephone and a visit or visits arranged. Secretaries were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule developed from that used in Preston. Up to five members were also interviewed, and a semi-structured schedule was used which was developed from the Preston member interview schedule. Added to it was a flash card which piloted a version of question 11 of the postal questionnaire ('outcomes of membership'). Systematic observation of at least one meeting was also undertaken. The focus of the observation was different from that in Preston. The (usually single) observer did not watch individuals and score behavioural items; she observed the meeting generally and for every 15-minute period wrote an account characterising what had been happening. The outcomes of this form of observation were very different from those in Preston but equally fascinating.

The selection of the Manchester studies took place a few weeks after that in South Cumbria and was deliberately non-random. By then, it was clear that the project needed to make contact with community and vocational organisations in quantity and in depth. Half a dozen organisations were selected but, in the event, contact with some proved difficult, even impossible. Some did not answer the telephone or letters and, when visited, were closed or had gone away. It was an operational demonstration of the less formal and unbureaucratised nature of this sector of voluntary organisations and was to be typical of the project's fieldwork in Manchester in the new two months. As indicated in 3.1, the project developed the methodology of identifying key informants in the five Manchester districts and of following 'leads' to organisations provided by them. It was sometimes more effective to visit an organisation unannounced and without any attempt to make an appointment. It was worth noting that several of the community organisations were worried about the origins and purpose of the UDACE

project and about the way in which information they supplied would be used.

The following organisations in Central Manchester became project case-studies:

INTEREST	Jewish Vegetarian Society
INTEREST/COMMUNITY	Community Computing
SERVICE	Asian Girls' Project
	Jewish Blind Society
SERVICE/COMMUNITY	Asian Family History Project
	Community Care Group
	Community Care Group
COMMUNITY	Community Arts Project
	Youth Centre Women's Group
	Community Association
COMMUNITY/VOCATIONAL	Girl's and Young Women's Project

In what follows seven case-studies have been chosen for full reporting. Case studies were written up to a standardised format and there are merits in illustrating here the relationships between the location/catchment area, the accounts of the initial contact, the member interviews and the systematic observation. 5.4 reports briefly on the remainder of the case-studies and on some quantitative data derived from the member interviews.

5.2 Selected case studies – South Cumbria

(i) NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Location/Catchment Area. The Society was located in a very attractive rural area – an ideal venue for a society of this sort. There were a large number of retired – often professional – people and some very expensive housing. The Society had a large membership and a very busy calendar of events.

Background. Project officers went to interview the secretary at her home, an old cottage on what was once a large private estate, overlooking a beautiful estuary. The cottage had a huge garden and access to a stretch of woodland at the end of the garden, an ideal home for a naturalist. The secretary's husband was chairman of the Society. The Society, 20 years old, had over 100 members, most of whom were very active. The bulk of their funds came from yearly subscriptions. A small charge was made to non-members who attended the occasional meeting. During the winter the Society met once a month (September to April) and in the summer they had weekly walks to places of natural history interest. At meetings they had talks, generally accompanied by slides. On the occasions a project officer attended there were in excess of 100 people at each meeting. Some talks planned were: 'Why Orchids, Birds and Butterflies?', 'Strolls in the local area' and 'Newfoundland and Nova Scotia'. Many of the members were over 50 years old and some were very elderly indeed. Despite drives in schools and local

youth organisations, it was reported that the Society could not get young people involved. Members were mainly retired professional or business people.

Observation. At the first meeting attended the slide projector jammed and a committee member very skilfully distracted the waiting audience by standing up and talking about some forthcoming events. The slides and the talk were fascinating. Certainly everyone watched in silence and 'oohed' and 'ahed' at the appropriate times. The speaker was interesting; the slides in black and white and colour; and the accompanying comments informative and often amusing. He included lots of anecdotes about the people in the slides – many of whom were known to members of the Society. His enthusiasm was very apparent.

At the second meeting, the hall was again crowded despite the bad weather. This time the meeting had the intriguing title of 'Why Orchids, Birds and Butterflies?' The speaker began by explaining his title. He then proceeded to give a slide show which was very well presented. He had made slides of pie charts drawn on a computer monitor. The speaker apologised that he had not quite perfected the technique but they were very clear and easy to understand, nevertheless. He had also made up some slides which showed selections of books on various forms of invertebrates and some members scribbled away in the darkness, probably trying to write down titles of books.

Members' Interviews. All but one of the members interviewed were over sixty – one very much older. They were very keen to be interviewed: on each occasion they were queuing up for their turn. All of those interviewed were already interested in natural history before they joined the Society. Three said they had wanted to meet others who shared their interest and all gave wanting to learn more about the subject as a reason for joining. One man claimed he had joined because his wife was sick of him being in the house such a lot and he had decided that the National History Society was as good a society to join as any other.

When asked what they thought they had got out of being a member a couple of interviewees mentioned that they had gained a greater knowledge of the area. One member who was especially interested in geology said that she had not learnt much more about this but had increased her knowledge in other areas of natural history. The social side of the Society was praised by all those interviewed. Only the gentleman who had said his wife drove him out of the house was slightly cynical of the enthusiasm of some of the members: 'An orchid's an orchid, isn't it?' Four members interviewed had been to other classes. One had been to a series of WEA lectures on natural history. She said she preferred the Society's meetings: 'These are more informal and friendly, but I think I learned more at WEA classes as there are more experts there.' Another member who had been to WEA classes said: 'You get the opportunity to get to know people better (here). You have more contact with people here.' Another echoed these feelings: 'You don't get to know people as well on short sessions – you meet the same people each time here and get to know them.'

(ii) PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Location/Catchment Area. The Society met at the church hall on the main street in the town. Most of the members lived locally though a few came in from neighbouring villages. It was a fairly affluent area with low unemployment and a number of retired people.

Background. The secretary thought that the Society had been in existence for fifteen years. They met eight times a year on the second Tuesday of the month. There were about sixty members, paying a membership subscription of £1. One of their main sources of revenue was the sale of stamps. A 'packet' was circulated amongst members and the society took 10% of the sales money. The secretary estimated that this probably raised around £300 per annum. The average attendance at meetings was 20, mostly male and in the age range 9–90, reported the secretary. The members came from all social backgrounds, 'even people from council houses'. Amongst the meetings arranged were a 'bourse', two talks, two quizzes and a competition night.

Observation. The project officer attended the bourse and talk on New Zealand. The meeting was held on a very cold, blustery night. The room was small, with chairs set very close together. About 16 people were there, including a number of young boys with their fathers. It was a very friendly meeting. After the usual business – minutes of meetings, etc. – the bourse began. This was new to most members, so the procedure had to be explained. There was an awkward silence while people worked out what they were expected to do. A number of members had brought their collections and they set these out on tables around the room. Members then circulated around the room and either looked at the collections displayed or bargained for any stamps that they were interested in. Once the members overcame their initial reticence, there was a lot of activity. Those displaying their stamps discussed histories very knowledgeably and there was a great deal of interest shown in this aspect of stamp collecting. One man was showing another the perforations on an envelope where disinfectant had been sprinkled to stop the spread of infectious disease. After a short while no one was still in their seat – conversations were very animated and it was obvious that everyone was having a very good time. Many of the collections were presented in very expensive looking albums. One of the young boys (about 12 years old) was explaining how he had mounted some of his stamps to another (adult) member. (Some of the young boys were treated as experts by the adults, with no sign of condescension.) After the bourse and a break for refreshments, the secretary gave a talk and slide show on New Zealand and its stamps.

Members' Interviews. The members present came from a range of social backgrounds and were mainly local. The members interviewed all gave 'to learn more about stamps' as their main reason for joining. One elderly gentleman mentioned the fact that he could buy stamps more cheaply here than from a dealer and that was his motive for joining. They all hoped to learn something new about their hobby. They all also talked about the social

advantages; they liked meeting others who shared their interest. When asked what they thought they learned from being a member, two of the interviewees mentioned how interesting they found learning the history of stamps – as one lady said 'It brings history to life'. One man said that knowing how old stamps were had helped him to give his son reference points for historical events. Others mentioned the practical tips they had picked up from other members: how best to display stamps, the value of stamps, etc. None of those interviewed had been to adult education classes. Two of those questioned said that being a member had made them more aware of the extent and limitations of their own knowledge.

(iii) DRAMATIC SOCIETY

Location/Catchment Area. Most meetings and rehearsals are held in a social club situated on an industrial estate two miles from the town centre. A large room with a stage and a bar was used. The Town Hall was hired for two productions a year and occasionally members met for readings in each other's homes. All 20 acting members and the behind-the-scenes workers lived in town. The Society was over 50 years old.

Background. The secretary said that there was an average attendance of 12 at monthly meetings. The 10-member committee did not meet on a fixed basis. There were regular social events, the highlight being the annual dinner held in November. There was quite a wide age range for female members; men tended to be aged 45 and over. It was difficult to attract younger members. Membership was a middle-class mix of building society workers, bank clerks, etc. who frequently moved in and out of the area on job promotion. The Society had some interaction with other local drama societies to see different productions and to 'borrow' actors and props.

Observations. Observation took place at a Saturday afternoon workshop and at an evening playreading. An outside professional was in charge of the workshop, attended by 14 people, including four visitors from another society. There was a friendly atmosphere. The workshop had a theme, 'Observation', and was about getting into a character part. Great use was made of mime, and considering there was no speech, it became quite noisy with laughter and extravagant gestures. The leader would talk for between five and ten minutes then set practical exercises, the participants working in small groups. After each exercise there was a chance to question and criticise. Lots of questions were asked. It became obvious that there was enough material for a whole day's workshop on this subject, not just two and a half hours. Although it started only 10 minutes late it over-ran and resulted in disappointment when only one group had time to enact their final sketch. Participants were of all ages and the younger people present were the most shy when it came to volunteering to do something alone or in pairs.

The play reading was attended by seven people, one of whom arrived half an hour late. One person was in charge and had selected plays to be read with a view to a future production. After an hour, they were still on the same play, copies of an alternative still in the leader's plastic carrier.

Members' Interviews. Mrs H. was typical of the keen over-60's member who took part in all activities from initial playreading to full production. She was conscious of a lack of up-and-coming younger members. Mr R., same age group, said he would like to see young people take over the committee 'to prevent it getting too fuddy duddy'. Mrs H. had joined a dramatic society wherever she lived and said she learns something new from being with different groups. She also felt there was the opportunity for any member to learn about all the different aspects of putting on a production from more experienced members. She thought it was difficult sometimes to suggest that some members might need further training to help their acting abilities. Mr R. felt he had learnt self-confidence and had increased his abilities by being a member of a number of dramatic societies.

Among younger (18–30) members, Miss H. had joined the Society after doing some drama at school. She said there were a lot of experienced people in this particular society from whom she had learnt about projecting her voice, and about characterisation. She thought you learnt more in such a friendly and informal setting than you did in a more structured class. 'New information and techniques are given to you gradually and allowed to sink in rather than thrown at you. You can go back over things, whereas in a class you move on to a different topic each time.'

Miss A., same age group, was also in two other local amateur dramatic societies, having joined this one because she was found suitable for a particular role. She enjoyed visits to other productions, from which she thought you could learn a lot. She felt that she learned most at rehearsal time, when everyone was 'getting themselves together'.

Mr E. was a fairly new recruit among the under-30s. He said he had joined to meet people and to give himself something to do in the evenings, although in subsequent questioning he appeared to be attending adult education classes in three other subjects on a regular weekly basis. He spoke of the mental stimulation and confidence he had gained from being a member of this Society. As an actor he was only involved in learning lines and new techniques for short periods of time and said he would like to attend more workshops.

Mrs J. (30–45 age group) wanted to get involved in the Society after seeing a production. She really liked doing anything 'behind the scenes', though would read informally if they were short of readers. She had found there was a lot to learn about looking after the props, and had discovered how important a job this was. With no previous experience at all, she had learned all about stage production from being a member. She said she had gleaned many useful items of information from just being present at all stages of production. She liked taking on new challenges and had attended many adult education classes in various subjects. 'You get more guidance in classes, perhaps, but here it's more challenging as you have to stand on your own feet and learn by your mistakes.' She felt that an amateur dramatic society gave you a good cross-section of people with whom to form friendships. She had also been given responsibilities for publicity and stimulating interest in the society and had improved her organisational skills in formulating a social programme for members.

5.3 Selected case studies – Central Manchester

(i) ASIAN FAMILY HISTORY PROJECT

Location/Catchment Area. The Family History Project was based in an oldish red-brick building which looked out of place in its surroundings of modern houses However, the building was a very busy place and acted as 'home' to a number of statutory and voluntary groups.

Background. The project began in 1982. The originators believed that second and especially third-generation Asians born in Britain were often unaware or ill-informed about the importance placed on tradition, history and culture by their parents and grandparents. Initially, a project was funded by the MSC and employed five people. That project inspired another project: the Minority Aid Project. Whilst working on the initial History Project, the organiser became aware of the many problems which women especially had in trying to fit into the community and still retain their own traditions. Many had language problems and had experienced difficulties in dealing with officials.

The Family History Project was continuing under funding from the education authority as part of the community education programme. An exhibition of photographs was available to schools, or to anyone else who was interested, in order to increase awareness of Asian culture. The young woman organiser had recently initiated another development. She had begun, in a fairly modest way, a keep-fit class once a week for Asian women. She hoped that once the women made the initial move to come out to classes, they would try other things. She was particularly concerned at the lack of technological knowledge amongst the Asian community and one of her long-term aims was to start a computer class for Asian women. She hoped that the women attracted to her classes would go back into the community and pass on the things they learned to other women. The target age group was the 25s to 35s.

Observation. The keep-fit class met in a hall in the North Hulme Centre. When the project visited, the group had been asked to use a smaller hall as the badminton group wanted to be in the hall which was generally used. It was very warm and smelt like a typical gym. The floor was very shiny and there were wall-bars round the walls. The class of five included the organiser and her assistant. The teacher was a very loud, lively lady. There were three Asian women – one had brought her baby with her and he sat in a bouncing cradle at the front of the class and bounced in time to the music; one woman was five months pregnant and also had a slipped disc, but she joined in with the gentler exercises and there was also a large black girl, who was the only one (apart from the teacher) in leotard and tights. The Asian women wore traditional dress, which hampered some of their movements. There were classrooms surrounding the hall and doors in each corner of the room meant that there was a tendency for people to use each end of the hall as a corridor

for access to rooms on the other side of the building. Before the class started, the assistant put up notices saying 'Class in Progress – Keep Out'. She also put chairs against the doors.

The class began with some relaxation exercises to one of the *Enigma Variations*. The women were a bit stiff and self-conscious at first, but gradually relaxed. The exercises became more energetic. The pregnant lady dropped out and talked to the baby, who was having a good time rocking in his cradle wildly and bouncing up and down. The teacher occasionally corrected individuals. At the beginning of each set of exercises she explained the purpose of the movements, what they were intended to achieve and why this was so.

Members' Interviews. The Asian women were keen to come to other classes but transport was a problem. They lived on the other side of Hulme and it was a long way to walk, especially with young children. These two women seemed 'middle-class' – they were well-educated and lived in a better part of Hulme. Both their husbands had white-collar jobs, and they also came to the Centre for classes.

(ii) COMMUNITY COMPUTING

Location/Catchment Area. Community Computing operated from a room in a church in the middle of blocks of high rise flats. The room was used free of charge and was quite large, but very warm and stuffy. It was well-decorated, as was the rest of the building – quite a contrast to the bleakness of its surroundings.

Background. The organisation was started in 1981 and had MSC funding until March 1984. Since then it had been self-financing. The helpers had put in some of their own money. When the MSC pulled out they left all the computers and related equipment. Actual running costs were minimal, but there was no finance to deal with repairs to equipment or to buy new software. There were strong hopes of further MSC funding and of local authority money, once the MSC funds were a reality. Community Computing was open to anybody, every day of the week, except Wednesday. There was a committee which met every month. There were about 30 people on this, including local Councillors and the local MP.

Observation. It was a very busy group – everyone was engrossed in individual work on computers. Apart from the noise of the computers it was very quiet. There was an air of great concentration and not much talking going on. All seemed quite competent in what they were doing.

Members' Interviews. The computers were available to anyone to use. Of the regular users 50% were local, the rest came from further afield – one regularly travelled from Bolton. At any one time there were probably 4–5 people using the equipment. After a feature on local radio, 50 people attended. Most of the users (the daytime ones at least) were unemployed people or housewives. Every Tuesday evening local schoolchildren came in and the helpers gave them advice and encouragement.

It was reported that as far as membership went the sexes were about even. One member said that she had been coming to Community Computing for nearly a year. She was an unemployed graduate and was using this period of unemployment as an opportunity to improve her computing skills. She said she did not really learn anything from other members. She was not sure that she would be more likely to get a job because of Community Computing but 'Coming here has put me in a new direction that I mightn't have considered if I hadn't come here.' She had been to computer courses run by manufacturers and wasn't sure which she thought preferable: 'The manufacturers' courses cover the lot, whilst when working on your own you can choose – just choose to concentrate on just the things *you* need but about equal I think in terms of learning.'

(iii) JEWISH BLIND SOCIETY

Location/Catchment Area. This Society had recently left its meeting place of many years and was currently meeting at a Jewish Cultural Centre until purpose-built premises were ready. Although the Centre was in a predominantly Jewish area, it was less convenient for some members relying on public transport. Consequently, they attended only functions to which they were brought.

Background. The members tended to be elderly, 'But actual age is not always a good guide and some of our members in their eighties can be livelier than younger members.' The Welfare Officer interviewed all potential members 'to make sure we are able to help them'. She kept stressing that they were very definitely not a 'friendship' (i.e. partners/marriage) organisation. She said that many who joined had not previously belonged to clubs: 'they are not really club types' but had given in because they were lonely and isolated with age and deteriorating sight.

Observation. Observation was for two 15-minute periods, separated by two member interviews. It was a Thursday afternoon handicraft session. The meeting was held in a large ground-floor room which contained separate tables seating about six at each. There were 22 members present. Those that had made their own way to the building – many were partially-sighted rather than totally blind – were prompt, as were the four voluntary workers but the minibus was late. The helpers said it was because they had to pick up people who lived some way from this temporary meeting place. The session was quite informal; people sat, or were seated, with their particular friends and all the men sat together at one table, though they were doing similar work.

The women were mainly knitting or doing needlework. The men were either weaving wide bands of material within a square frame or wrapping wool round cardboard to make pompoms for soft toys. There was an air of subdued excitement as people chattered to each other. The woman in charge went from table to table giving help and advice when necessary, but told the observer that she was not teaching anything new that day: 'They don't like too many new crafts; really they just come to talk.'

There was certainly no pressure to do anything and some of the men

appeared to be gazing into space, but they could have been listening to the table leader who was partially sighted and talked about music. (He was later to read out extracts, including all the wills, from the local Jewish newspapers.) From time to time the welfare officer called for quiet and announced forthcoming events. The voluntary helpers divided themselves among tables to chat or to help with knitting. On one table a woman was showing old photographs to her neighbour, having discovered they had been at the same school. Plates of cakes were being lined up alongside cups and saucers on a table at the end of the room. These would be served half-way through the two-hour session.

Members' Interviews. Both Mrs S. and Mrs A. said that they had joined because they were lonely. At first they had attended more events but they only came now if they were brought. They seemed to enjoy the keep-fit on a Monday, when they did exercises to music while sitting in chairs. Most people interviewed enjoyed all kinds of music and some said that they missed going to the concerts at the Hallé – free tickets were no longer provided. (Most of the people were not particularly well-off, and did not seem to have local family.) One member commented that she did feel that the club did not allow people to be individuals: 'They could do with being a bit broader, they are inclined to get everyone to do the same thing at the same time, I suppose they don't want any trouble.' Another said she enjoyed the companionship 'and the quarrels'. She said you learned to be tolerant. This was the first club she had ever joined. (She had been a member for over 13 years and she was now well over 60.) Mrs C. said she had enjoyed learning new crafts but now that her eyes were so bad she stuck to knitting with brightly coloured wool. She had tried to learn braille but said it was too late in life for her as she found it difficult to concentrate on anything for long.

Mrs V. said that at the Tuesday evening members' club, which had 160 members, there was ballroom dancing, musical evenings, and 'discussions on everything under the sun'. Mrs V. thought 'natter and nosh' evenings were the most popular but the highlight was the annual garden party which raised funds for furnishings for the club's new premises.

A conclusion from the observation and the interviews was that probably the first thing the members learned was how to be 'clubbable' and interact with other people. It did seem to encourage them to help one another physically: they were very conscious of how much worse other people's sight was compared to their own. Initially, if not too set in their ways, they would learn something in the handicraft class and how to exercise sitting down in the keep-fit class. But the contact with others also appeared to stimulate an interest in a wide range of local and national topics – they liked to discuss current affairs.

(iv) COMMUNITY CARE GROUP

Location/Catchment Area. The group operated from a room in a Methodist church, a modern building. There were two sessions a week, on Mondays at 10 a.m. until noon, and on Thursday from 2–4 p.m., when workers

(volunteers) could be contacted. In addition the workers did home visiting by appointment and organised social events for their contacts, who tended to be white, elderly or unemployed and living in the vicinity.

Background. The chairperson had been a member of the Group (they were all volunteers) for three years. He joined when he was out of work 'and wanted something useful to do with my time.' There were about 20 volunteers, but many of the younger ones who were unemployed left when the secured work. The Group received a grant from the city social services department, which had recently been sending them former residents of pyschiatric hospitals to become volunteers. This development was not fully welcomed by the Group, we were told, because the former residents were not always successful volunteers, though they were always made welcome as visitors.

Observation. The project officer spent 15 minutes observing in the general office, before interviewing members, and a further short period at the end of her visit mainly talking to a lady in a wheelchair who looked after a very impressive jig-saw library.

During the first 15 minutes the telephone rang constantly and was answered in turn by two volunteers. Another volunteer made the welcoming cup of coffee given to all visitors, and a young girl who had come with a housing-type query was sitting on one of the four chairs. One of the phone calls was to ask for someone to call and see an elderly lady and do some shopping. Another was to confirm arrangements for a trip to a carol concert the following month.

The talk with the jig-saw 'librarian' revealed that there was an ordinary book lending library too. There were nearly 200 jig-saws and the librarian did them all herself before they were lent out, to make sure all the pieces were there.

It had long gone 4.0 p.m. but the phone still rang. One volunteer was still there and no one seemed to be going to shut up shop.

Members' Interviews. Miss T. (aged 60-plus) had been associated with the Group since 1981, when it was re-started. She read about this in the local newspaper and joined 'to help out'. There were only three volunteers in those days. She said they did not get a lot of 'heavy' problems and thought they got more problems with volunteers – 'but we're a mutual help society really'. Volunteers wrote down everything that happens when they are at the base and these reports are later analysed to help monitor the kinds of help required. Miss T. said that those helped tended to be elderly white people and all except two of the current volunteers were white. Another member spoke of the success of their Open Days, held the third Sunday afternoon in each month. Transport was provided if necessary and all people with whom the Group had contact were invited by letter, followed up by a telephone call. Take-up was good – between 30 and 40 at the last few sessions. People donated cakes and other food and the Group asked people to give a talk or demonstration.

Mrs C. said she had learnt what 'real caring' meant since becoming a volunteer 18 months ago. She claimed she had learned how to get the best out of people: 'You get all sorts here, you know.' All volunteers said that they did not try to tackle serious problems, they would refer them to the correct people, but many people called in simply because they were lonely and could often end up becoming volunteers themselves.

There was a one-day training programme for new volunteers, who had to attend monthly meetings. Only when they had worked in the office at the base for some time were they sent out on home visits. For anyone with time and empathy for elderly housebound people, a good telephone manner or social and office skills – or the potential to develop them – the Group offered considerable scope. The jig-saw 'librarian' had never done anything like this before and had devised her own cataloguing system. Another volunteer was learning typing and duplicating.

5.4 Other case-studies: South Cumbria and Central Manchester

In three other South Cumbrian voluntary organisations, investigated as case-studies, members in their various ways emphasised to project officers what they had 'learned about other people'. In two at least, this learning had been quite unintended and unexpected.

In the pre-school playgroups, mothers, of course, mentioned children first. 'I've found out more about things children can do'; 'I've learnt about the way children play.' But equally they claimed that they had 'learned' about the other adults and about relating to them: 'You can see how jealousy works in children – and in mothers too'; 'I think you learn tolerance, of other members and with the children') 'It teaches you about getting along with different people.' At Oxfam, all those interviewed had joined to be 'helpful', to do something 'useful', and all observed that they had, in fact, learned a great deal 'about other people', customers and other volunteers. They gave many instances. One lady described how 'shocked' she had been to realise that pilfering went on, even in a charity shop and that customers would switch price labels.

In the Soroptomists members talked about joining (on invitation) to meet other business and professional women and to learn from them about their professional roles and their views. The international aspect of the Soroptomists was an attraction and supplied overt learning goals with which they identified. The sense of solidarity and community was important. One younger member said that she had found members very supportive and helpful when she joined and was getting over a 'messy' divorce. At the time she had felt that she could cope only with mixing socially with women and with like-minded women in particular. Being a Soroptomist gave 'a sense of purpose to her present life'.

In the organisations investigated in the other Central Manchester case-studies, the project was struck by their variety, fluidity, dependence upon uncertain finance and the efforts of a few activists (whether paid or volunteers), and the enormity of the economic, social and environmental problems that surrounded some of them.

A community care organisation in a predominantly white working class 'elderly' area had existed for five years and was largely self-financing. It concerned itself with providing car transport and social events for elderly people. The organiser spoke concernedly to the interviewer about their failure to involve younger adults and younger people in this organisation. A nearby community association was made up of a variety of semi-autonomous groups including a drop-in-centre for unemployed. The informant here described the association's management committee as 'middle class' and concluded that membership was a 'learning experience' for members. 'They have been brought into contact with sections of the community they'd normally not meet,' as well as having to deal with finances, lease negotiation, maintenance, etc.

A youth centre in a derelict area had spawned a women's group, which had come into existence because of the role of the centre in providing advice for local women. The women's group ran totally informally; participants played badminton, lifted weights, sewed or just talked. An Asian girl's project elsewhere had turned, by local demand, into an Asian women's association and, apart from a range of outreach work, had developed classes in dressmaking, embroidery, English, keep-fit and management skills. A community arts project had (through Urban Aid and local authority funds) three full-time workers and extremely good printing, painting and photographic facilities. These were open to use by any community group that wished to call in to use them and the workers would advise or demonstrate on their use. The project officers noted that individuals used these facilities infrequently. The community arts project was situated in an area of run-down and vandalised property, seedy pubs and clubs and a few shops. The area was a pick-up place for drugs and prostitutes. The building housing the arts project was locked securely, covered in wire shutters and with no obvious entrance.

It will be clear that in these Central Manchester case-studies there was no easy line to draw between statutory and voluntary provision. Voluntary management committees might secure funds, employ paid workers but be subsequently infrequent in their involvement; paid employees of a statutory organisation might set up additional activity in their 'spare time' and involve voluntary helpers. Clearly conclusions about the presence or absence of learning activity in some of the organisations investigated in Central Manchester depend crucially upon the definitions of 'learning activity' and upon the weight to be given to a limited amount of subjective testimony.

As indicated above, prompt cards were used in association with most member interviews, particularly in South Cumbria (actually in the case of 25 members in South Cumbria – 7 organisations – and only 5 members in Central Manchester – 3 organisations). In fact, the cards were piloting questions to be used in the postal survey. Table 18 contains the responses to a list of statements which were an early version of question 11 on the postal questionnaire ('outcomes of membership'). The responses are interesting because they were made by individuals reflecting upon their *own* experience alone. In the postal survey informants were asked to generalise about the experience of others – the members of their organisation.

As was to be expected, Table 18 shows strong agreement by respondents with statements about 'making friends', 'learning a lot more about a particular subject' (the phrase 'a lot more' should be noted) and 'developing new skills and abilities'. Over 70% of the interviewees found 'life a lot more interesting now' (and 'a lot more' should again be noted). That almost half of the interviewees (in a considerable range of organisations) agreed that they had 'become better at organising things' seemed significant. Most of the positive responses to 'I have learned to teach others' came from the Pre-School Playgroup and probably referred to teaching children.

Table 18. Members' interviews in South Cumbria and Central Manchester: personal experience of membership (Question: 'The following is a list of some of the things which people have said about being a member of a voluntary organisation. Do any of these statements apply to you?)

No.	Statement	Yes		No		Don't know/ no response	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	I have learned a lot more about a particular subject	23	76.7	4	13.3	3	10.0
2	I have become better at organising things	14	46.7	13	43.3	3	10.0
3	I have received training	11	36.7	19	63.3	0	0
4	I have learned a lot more about my abilities and limitations	15	50.0	10	33.3	5	16.7
5	I have made friends	29	96.7	1	3.3	0	0
6	I have developed new skills and abilities	13	43.3	12	40.0	5	16.7
7	I have become more concerned about the welfare of others	19	63.3	7	23.3	4	13.3
8	I have learnt how to do things I have never done before	15	50.0	13	43.3	2	6.7
9	I have become better at speaking in front of other people	12	40.6	17	56.7	1	3.3
10	I have learnt how to teach others	7	23.3	18	60.0	5	16.7
11	My life is a lot more interesting now	22	73.3	3	10.0	5	16.7

Table 19 shows responses to a question on reasons for joining the organisation, for which prompts were also used. Most respondents gave more than one response.

Table 19. Members' interviews in South Cumbria and Central Manchester: reasons for joining organisation

Reason for joining	Positive response	
	No.	%
To pursue a particular hobby/special interest	12	18.2
To improve skills	4	6.1
To learn something new	14	21.2
To help others	6	9.1
For political/religious reasons	0	0
To make/meet friends	20	30.3
To prevent bordeom	5	7.6
To provide a service for the local community	3	4.5
To help unemployed people	1	1.5
To keep fit	1	1.5
Totals:	66	100.0%

Again, in Table 19, 'making friends' is the reason for involvement in voluntary organisation activity which most people feel able to give. The overt reference to learning 'something new' by almost half of the interviewees is worthy of note.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The project has been successful in achieving its objectives of mapping learning activity in voluntary organisations and in examining and classifying that activity. There are no known reasons why the findings from South Cumbria, Central Manchester and Preston (and the differences between voluntary organisations in those areas) should not be regarded as generalisable to the rest of the country.

This chapter contains an extended summary of the project's findings on learning activities in voluntary organisations in the form of a discussion of the contents of the following taxonomy, which is proposed as applicable to voluntary organisations.

Formal Learning Activities	**Informal Learning Activities**
Teaching	*Practice Learning*
Organised Discussion	*Apprenticeship Learning*
Training	*Learning from Experience*
Assessment and Certification	*Learning through Social Interaction*

The chapter goes on to show the respects in which the present investigation is an advance upon previous research and to discuss the extent to which certain informal hypotheses, which were posited before the start of the Preston case-study, are proven. It concludes by making various observations which are relevant to voluntary/statutory relationships – the starting point of UDACE's interest in these matters.

6.1 Mapping learning activity in voluntary organisations

Despite the limitations of resource, ambitious research objectives and (particularly) time, the UDACE-sponsored investigation was successful and had some important findings (although the complexity of the topic meant each 'answer' has spawned several new, and deeper, 'questions').

Certainly the extent of voluntary organisation activity in the three study areas is remarkable. We clearly live in a pluralist society and there are few areas of human concern or interest in which, it seems, people do not group

together to achieve objectives which they collectively set for themselves. In so doing, they develop forms of organisation, sources of finance and divisions of responsibility of various kinds. Some voluntary organisations have origins which go beyond the memories of current members; some have recently sprung into existence and will fade equally quickly. Some are started by one or two individual enthusiasts; others maintain an interest or service which began at, but later passed from, the hands of a statutory provider; and others appear to have had some form of spontaneous generation which no one can quite recall.

We know of no reason why we should not conclude that the level of voluntary organisation activity which we found in the three North-Western study areas is typical of that throughout England and Wales at least. Nevertheless, the situation, particularly in the inner cities, is probably volatile and dynamic, and there may well be important variations according to local conditions. The project's most obvious failings lay in the extent of its contacts with unemployed workers' groups and ethnic minority organisations. Any generalizations it could make in these areas would be unsound. These are matters for further study. The differences between what we found in Central Manchester, South Cumbria and Preston are indicative of what might be found in inner city, urban and rural areas elsewhere in the country. It seems highly likely that environmental conditions, transport and communication facilities, levels of affluence, social class mix and local 'social cohesion' (i.e. factors such as perception of local crime rate and types of community facilities and accommodation available) will affect the kinds of voluntary organisation activity in a particular area, its extent, and the involvement in it by the local adult population. What we are clear about is that the impetus towards creation of, and involvement in, voluntary organisations is present in all our communities and we think that local conditions will help to determine the extent to which that impetus is given expression. In other words, voluntary organisation activity is a very hardy flower which will take hold anywhere in society but its roots will go deeper in some soils and its varieties will be greater in different seasons.

It is usually dysfunctional to generalise about voluntary organisations. As pointed out early in this report, the label itself has uncertain validity. People have different motives for joining voluntary organisations, do different things as members and have different notions of what they are going to get out of membership. The framework of orientations (*INTEREST, SERVICE, ADVOCACY, SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, VOCATIONAL*) in the research design held up satisfactorily throughout the fieldwork and seem to have proved their utility (but only as 'orientations'). A simple clustering of some of the data from the postal survey led to the suggestion that two basic 'orientations' (*INTEREST* and *SERVICE*) can be used to categorise voluntary organisations – or to interpret that suggestion further, that the two mainsprings of motive for joining voluntary organisations can be characterised as: 'to pursue a particular *INTEREST*: a hobby, cause or special activity'; and 'to provide a *SERVICE*, to do something for other people'.

The project has been concerned primarily with mapping *learning activity* in voluntary organisations. There is no doubt that it has uncovered a great deal of what may be termed 'learning activity' and that the incidence, variety and

levels of sophistication of that activity vary between different kinds of voluntary organisation. It has also found some evidence (largely subjective) of successful learning and it has gathered a large number of accounts of 'learning outcomes' which may or may not have been associated with 'learning activities'. The project has deliberately used different investigatory techniques (several kinds of observation, interviews with informants about their own learning and about other people's learning and large-scale postal survey supplemented by telephone interviews) in order to examine the issue of learning activity in voluntary organisations in a number of complementary ways.

Any reader should weigh carefully the reliability and degrees of objectivity of these different investigatory techniques when considering our conclusions and should bear in mind the differences between 'learning activity', 'successful learning' and 'learning outcomes'.

6.2 Variations between study areas

In various parts of the report differences between voluntary organisations in the three study areas have been noted. It seems possible to explain most of the differences in terms of the prominent geographical and socio-economic characteristics of the areas. South Cumbria (at least the part we surveyed) being relatively affluent, with low unemployment, few members of ethnic minority groups and decidedly rural; Preston being less affluent, with higher unemployment, some members of ethnic minority groups and urban; Central Manchester (generalising across the five districts) being not affluent, with high unemployment, many members of ethnic minority groups and inner-city.

In fact, the contrasts between Central Manchester on the one hand, and Preston and South Cumbria on the other, stand out most starkly. Over two-thirds of the voluntary organisations in Central Manchester which responded to the postal survey claimed 'to provide a SERVICE to others'. In the other two study areas the proportions were much lower. Similarly, in Central Manchester, voluntary organisations were much more likely to see themselves as there to 'represent and/or help the local COMMUNITY' and to 'help the UNEMPLOYED'. In its original grouping of voluntary organisations according to their orientations (Table 1), the project identified twice as many *SERVICE* organisations in Central Manchester as in South Cumbria, twice as many *ADVOCACY* organisations and one third the number of *INTEREST* organisations as in South Cumbria and Preston respectively. Accordingly, the analysis of the postal survey showed that, compared to Preston and South Cumbria, in Central Manchester voluntary organisations were much more likely to use unpaid volunteers and to have paid employees. They were more likely to have LEA grant aid and grant aid from other sources and much less likely to rely on members' subscriptions (Table 10). Indeed, they were less likely to have 'members' and more likely to have 'users'.

As reported in section 3.5, organisations in Central Manchester appeared to be less likely than those in South Cumbria and Preston to engage in 'demonstrations', 'rehearsals/practices', 'competitions', 'exhibitions' and more likely to have 'discussions', 'seminars/workshops' and 'administration'. Table 14 shows that members of organisations in Central Manchester were more likely than those in South Cumbria and Preston to 'increase their interest in the welfare of others', 'develop useful skills', 'become more self-confident about their abilities', 'learn how to explain things to others', 'become better at organising' and 'become more likely to get a job or promotion in a job'. All of these differences must relate closely to the kinds of voluntary organisations which were likely to be found in Central Manchester in higher proportion than elsewhere.

Throughout this report, comments have been made about the differences which the environment of Central Manchester and the kinds of voluntary organisations to be found there made to the fieldwork in making it less structured and more *ad hoc*. We believe that this was partly, but not wholely, a by-product of the project decision to concentrate in Central Manchester, particularly on fieldwork, with *COMMUNITY* and *VOCATIONAL* voluntary organisations.

6.3 The nature and extent of learning activity in voluntary organisations

In formal adult education, as many surveys from both sides of the Atlantic have shown, it is possible to conceptualise adults' motivations for attending educational classes as (i) intrinsic/'educational', (ii) extrinsic/instrumental or (iii) social/affiliative. Often an adult's motives are a combination of two or three of these categories, but, because an adult class carries the 'official' label of 'education', it is rare for an adult not to include the notion of 'learning' in the cluster of motives to which he or she will lay claim. Certainly, those who plan, finance and organise formal adult education will normally associate with it definite structures of teaching, classroom discussion and practice, sequenced and planned learning often divided into stages and programmes, an emphasis on the desirability of new learning, often the notion that theory precedes practice and sometimes assessment and a form of certification.

In voluntary organisations it is different. The 'official' label associated with an organisation is related to its orientation – to pursue an interest, to provide a service, to advocate a course, etc. To pursue an interest might involve intending to learn more about it, but equally it might involve just intending to do it. An adult may speak about 'learning' as a motive for attending a voluntary organisation, but is most likely not to do so. Moreover, throughout this report there is a great deal of evidence for the importance of social/affiliative reasons for voluntary organisation attendance – for making and being with friends. One may, indeed, 'learn' from friends but without intending to.

Thus, it seems important to discuss the project's evidence on the nature and extent of learning activity in voluntary organisations in terms of both formal learning activities (which are organised for learning and from which participants intend to learn) and informal learning activities (which may not be labelled by participants as learning and in which what is learned may not be readily identified as a particular skill or body of knowledge, the possession of which may be demonstrated or assessed).

The following discussion touches on these aspects:

Formal Learning Activities	**Informal Learning Activities**
Teaching	Practice Learning
Organised Discussion	Apprenticeship Learning
Training	Learning from Experience
Assessment and Certification	Learning through Social Interaction

FORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

(i) Teaching. If we take formal teaching to be a lecturer/teacher addressing a group of students then one can say that such a situation is often to be found in voluntary organisations. As Table 12 shows, 47% of respondents reported that meetings of their organisations included 'talks or demonstrations by visiting speakers' (if the item had simply been 'talks or demonstrations' then the percentage would, no doubt, have been higher). It is questionable to what extent a talk or demonstration is a 'learning activity' in anything more than an accidental sense if the talks are occasional and sporadic, or even regular but unconnected. There is doubt that 'visiting speakers' will be well co-ordinated into a developmental learning programme. The project found little evidence of systematic note-taking or revision of formal teaching. In the Preston observational study, there was almost no reference to 'RECORDS' as a behavioural item (Table 2); on the other hand, the project officer in the case-study of the South Cumbria Natural History Society observed members trying to make notes in the dark at an illustrated talk! In the Sub-Aqua Club in Preston, students were observed to be listening to talks from senior members about a particular technique and then putting it into practice in the pool. One student admitted to not comprehending the talk and only understanding the technique once he had tried it in practice. Of course, it is true that, while formal lectures in universities are usually part of a planned programme, we have limited evidence that students learn from, or even comprehend, them.

If teaching is defined to include one-to-one instruction, then it can be found in voluntary organisations in significant quantities. In the postal survey, 18.4% of respondents claimed it for their organisation (Table 12). The word 'instruction', of course, is a strong one. It is formal and focused. It is more than the learning by 'apprenticeship' which was held to characterise the model rail society and which is discussed below. It may include 'coaching' in practical skill areas (and, in the telephone interviews, e.g. with the Judo and Rifle Clubs, the distinction was drawn between 'coaching' and 'training'. Indeed, Table 13 shows that in the postal survey, 25.8% of respondents

claimed that in their organisation 'all' or 'most' of their members learned 'how to explain things to others', and in 16.1% of organisations 'all' or 'most' 'learned how to show other people how to do things'.

Who are the teachers in voluntary organisations? The case-studies in Preston, South Cumbria and Central Manchester (Chapters 2 and 5) show clearly that, for much of the time, it is other members, usually the more 'senior', experienced and knowledgeable, who 'teach'. The Artists' Group in Preston had its acknowledged experts in particular media; in Sub-Aqua, Red Cross, Mountain Search and Rescue, Model Rail, and Rifle Club, there were members who knew or who could do more than their peers and would pass on their expertise as part of the activity of the society. Usually they were not trained how to do so (although some organisations, e.g. Pre-School Playgroups, did have sophisticated training programmes for that very purpose). Some members might be 'certified' as advanced in the skill or topic (e.g. Judo or Red Cross) and thus, *ipso facto*, be recognised as able to aid and assist those junior to themselves. The Baha'is had 'leaders' but, generally, notions of seniority and ability, teacher and taught were fluid and could be interchanged. The telephone interviews uncovered several instances of what we called 'cascade learning'. The committee members were taught something by the chairman; once they had mastered it they each passed it on to a group of members; or, some members went away to a course or visit and returned to teach to fellow members what they had learned. There is the pleasant example in the South Cumbrian Philatelic Society of learning democracy in which adult men were shown techniques by 12-year-old boys. In pursuit of an interest, each member may have an expertise and, therefore, potentially be a teacher.

All of which, of course, begs the question of how much 'bad' (inefficient, ineffectual or misleading) teaching there is in voluntary organisations. We did not find any blatant examples, but neither were we looking for them. The fieldworkers noted examples where communications and/or instructions could have been clearer; they also enjoyed some talks and demonstrations on topics of which they had no experience and which fired their interest. In one sense there was usually no professional 'quality control' of teaching; on the other hand, members had total freedom to come or to go, to listen or not, to move from one expert to another. Many voluntary organisations were considerable living learning resources thanks to the skills and experience of their members.

(ii) Training. If we take 'training' to be a more closely focused concept than 'teaching', that is, a programme of planned and guided teaching (probably using various methods) designed to achieve identifiable learning gains in recognisable knowledge, skill or performance areas, then there is plenty of evidence in this report of the presence of training in voluntary organisations. This is so particularly in *SERVICE* organisations, and in organisations concerned with the health and safety of participants and/or other people (e.g. mountain search and rescue, sub-aqua, Red Cross, victims' support, pre-school playgroups, etc.). In the case-studies in South Cumbria and Central Manchester, over one third of interviewees responded positively to the statement 'I have received training' (Table 18). In the postal survey, almost one third of respondents (29.1%) reported that training sessions

were arranged by their organisation (Table 12) and, in terms of 'receiving training' as an outcome of membership (Table 13) the following proportions were found:

all	*most*	*some*	*none*
25.4%	15.3%	33.3%	26.0%

Of course, philosophers of education have laboured extensively to draw hard-and-fast distinctions between 'teaching' and 'training'. Voluntary organisations give them more material on which to work. In the case of an art or craft, for example, in which there are questions of good taste and good design, there is a fine line to be drawn between teaching a student to express his or her potential, and training him or her to follow the accepted canons for a conventionally desirable product. It was possible to wonder if this was an issue in the telephone interview with the informant from the flower club. Or the issue may be one of organisation and coping. One member interviewed in the Jewish Blind Society touched on a distinction between teaching and training when she made the cogent observation that 'They could do with being a bit broader, they are inclined to get everyone to do the same thing at the same time. I suppose they don't want any trouble.'

Philosophers of education will, then, suggest that 'training' is not 'education'. Nor, they will say, is 'persuading', 'convincing' and certainly not 'propagandising' the same as 'educating'. We were interested in the thought that voluntary organisations are 'closed' groups in the sense that they bring together like-minded individuals who have, for the most part, made up their minds that a common cause, activity or interest matters more than other causes, activities or interests. Thus a certain open-mindedness must often be ruled out; it may not be common, or even acceptable, within the group to raise open questions about the use, sense, cost, etc. of the common interest. This may not matter too much, although we noted our suspicion that when *ADVOCACY* organisations asserted that 'we are an *educational* organisation', they might mean that there was a particular 'truth' in which the public required educating.

(iii) Discussions. In the postal survey, 51.8% of respondents said that meetings of their organisation involved 'discussions'. However, it makes sense in this section to refer explicitly to planned and structured discussion, of which much adult education (particularly the classic liberal adult education classes of university extension and WEA courses) consists. Thus, in the postal survey, 21.2% of respondents referred to seminars/workshops and 33.5% to group work. The telephone interviews detailed different examples of seminars/workshops, whole or part-day, organised by someone external to the organisation or by members, run for members alone, for members and professionals, or for members and the public. 'Group work' may have been a somewhat more ambiguous term in the survey and have been taken to include, e.g., external projects such as mural painting and street demonstrations (and thus to have belonged more properly to the area of informal learning).

After a talk by a visiting speaker, there will often be a question-and-answer session and general discussion which may or may not be desultory and which

may or may not improve understanding. Some general discussions are specifically planned: a drama society gave one example in the telephone interviews. It was remarkable that in the observational study of six Preston organisations, almost no behaviour was recorded which was 'not dealing with matters related to the organisation', and one of the behavioural items was 'DISCUSSES'. In the artists' group, for example, 32% of the behaviour observed was discussion, but only 6.5% was discussion not concerned with art or painting. Even in the Jazz Club (and one acknowledges the hearing powers of the fieldworkers in achieving these statistics) the corresponding figures were 17% and 9%.

Of course, discussion was an important therapy for the volunteers in the Child Welfare Group. In mountain search and rescue, it appeared that they never relaxed – the leaders were watching for particular attitudes in collective discussions. In the Soroptomists, discussion promoted a sense of well-being and solidarity by the collective interchange of background and views which most, if not all, members held in common.

(iv) Assessment and Certification. Largely, learning in voluntary organisations is not assessed by formal tests or examinations which are externally validated. That is the case if one takes the broad sweep of organisations. However, this report contains several examples of organisations – both *INTEREST* and *SERVICE* – for which there are national schemes of assessment and credit, which establish standards of performance and achievement: Red Cross, sub-aqua, judo and the flower club are examples. It is not always, or normally, the case that testing is carried out by examiners external to the local group; often this role is entrusted to senior members and those who have higher, accredited levels of achievement. We do not know about the reliability of the 'standards' which are set by these assessments.

Assessment, however informal, is a necessary component of many other organisations, *SERVICE* in particular. Any organisation which is concerned with the welfare or safety of others, and has a form of training or preparation for novices, is likely to assess members before they go into the field or deal with the public. This informal assessment may be undertaken by senior members during early experience, and may, in fact, be ongoing (e.g. mountain search and rescue); it may be preparatory and post-experience through the means of discussion and review (e.g. victims' support scheme). Volunteers may have to undertake 'safe', office-based jobs to learn the routine before being allowed into contact with clients (e.g. community care, Manchester). Sometimes volunteers will, as a result of informal assessment, be asked to discontinue particular duties (e.g. Age Concern).

Of course there are many voluntary organisations in which there is a physical product or a viewable activity through which members will display their achievements and which will attract formal or informal assessment. Artists display their work in exhibitions, and prizes may be given. Choirs, drama groups, rifle and judo clubs compete against each other and an external expert may adjudicate. Within an organisation, puzzles, quizzes and competitions may be devised both as entertainment and as a means of checking knowledge.

As one or two interviewees pointed out to us, since the purpose of their organisation was a particular interest or service, you knew if a member had learned something, not by giving a test but simply by telling the individual to go ahead and 'do' it. Failure to do it was a clear demonstration of the need for further learning.

It is clear, then, that on questions of assessment and certification in voluntary organisations, there is a wide spectrum of practice which overlaps at one extreme with the formal educational sector in the presence of nationally agreed schemes of certification, passes through *ad hoc* expert and peer assessment of ability, to the demonstration of competence in practice and in the products of one's skill.

INFORMAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

(v) Practice Learning. If we are to generalise, then the most obvious generalisation to make about learning activity in voluntary organisations is that it is characterised more by practice learning, by learning through doing, than by formal teaching. Unlike schooling, voluntary organisations are not preparatory to life, they are life. Unlike most adult education, they are not confined to short, 10 or 20-week, part-time courses taking place, normally, in a classroom at a fixed location at a fixed time. Most voluntary organisations have some immediate activity, end-product, performance, task or skill which may be practised within the organisation's meetings. But it is not confined to these meetings, and is also practised either as part of the organisation's external role or has a regular place in the individual's daily life.

Thus, in the case of the Preston case-studies, the behavioural time 'PRACTISES' represented 61.5% of the items scored for the artists' group, 34% of those scored for the model rail society and 16.5% of those for the Red Cross group (Table 2). In these three instances, both artists and model rail enthusiasts were likely to pursue their interest in their own homes and in other contexts when not with society members. Red Cross members were trained particularly to practise their skills at public events.

If we look briefly at the other case-studies and telephone interviews, this can be replicated throughout. Most *SERVICE, ADVOCACY* and *COMMUNITY* voluntary organisations are concerned with doing or with preparing and then doing. The community associations and community projects are there to help individuals and groups and to lobby for them; the pressure and political groups, such as the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the Anti-Apartheid Group ('we learn by any mistakes'), are concerned to be in the thick of society, seeking to change attitudes; the mountain search and rescue association and the victim support scheme have their rationale in practical preparations for the time of need and, when it comes, in putting skills and knowledge into practice successfully. As far as other *INTEREST* groups are concerned, the amateur dramatic societies all aim for the occasions when their rehearsals become performances before the public; the rifle and judo clubs punctuate their activities by competitions, displays and

demonstrations. The natural history society went on field trips and excursions.

Most of these organisations show the two aspects of practice learning: one is the repeated 'practice' of a skill or activity in order to master or improve it, usually to bring performance to an acceptable level or to prevent deterioration of the skill through lack of use. The other aspect is that of putting what is known 'into practice' and subsequently (normally) reviewing performance in order to reach conclusions on how it might be improved. In the latter aspect of 'practice learning' or 'learning for practice' what is learned may be unexpected – 'I didn't know it would feel like that', 'I didn't realise that – why wasn't I prepared for it?'

Overall, the characteristic of the voluntary organisations which we studied was practice not theory, activity not passivity. Members normally did not sit to listen, read, write or think; or, if they did, they did other things too. More frequently members practised, talked, performed, acted and did.

(vi) 'Apprenticeship' Learning. Elsewhere we have emphasised the role of senior and experienced members in passing on what they know to those less experienced (p.85). There may be a fine line to be drawn between individual instruction and what we call 'apprenticeship' learning but we think that the latter can be observed. 'Apprenticeship' learning is a sub-set of practice learning. There is an ongoing activity – not necessarily defined by participants as a learning situation. Some members are experienced or recognised as more expert. Less experienced members will formally or informally be associated with them, will watch, imitate, ask questions, practise on their own, have things explained to them and receive comments on their performance. In the observational studies in Preston, the model railway society was identified as the paradigmatic example of 'apprenticeship' learning.

(vii) Learning from Experience. 'Learning from experience' is almost synonymous with one aspect of 'practice learning' but we take it here to refer particularly to unexpected learning, learning of skills, abilities and knowledge which are not central or 'official' to the organisation's purposes.

Thus, the following responses were recorded from respondents to question 11 in the postal survey (see Table 13).

	Of how many members would you say the statement is true?									
Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .	**All**		**Most**		**Some**		**None**		**Total**	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Lead more active lives	73	19.3	122	32.3	140	37.0	43	11.4	378	100
Become more familiar with committee work	31	8.6	51	14.1	224	61.9	56	15.5	362	100
Become more practical	21	7.0	45	13.2	194	57.1	76	22.4	340	100
Become better at organising	18	5.4	36	11.1	178	55.1	93	28.8	323	100

At best, these responses are subjective generalisations by single informants about unmeasurable changes in other people, but their general tenor is borne out by reports of learning gains in the case-studies and the telephone interviews. There are many references to the amount of administrating and organising involved in voluntary organisations and of how members learn to do it. In particular, the responsibilities of committee members and office-holders are emphasised. Usually they have no training for their roles; they have to grow with their roles, learn on the job, find out how and what to do and acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out duties satisfactorily. Almost half of the interviewees in the South Cumbria and Central Manchester case-studies responded positively to the statement 'I have become better at organising' (Table 18). In the Preston case-study, 16 out of 60 interviewees had been committee members and half of these unprompted made reference to gains in self-confidence as a result of their committee work. On this question of self-confidence, the postal survey contains the following response:

	Of how many members would you say the statement is true?			
Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .	**All** %	**Most** %	**Some** %	**None** %
Become more self-confident about their own abilities	14.2	31.6	42.6	11.5

This response refers to all members, not just committee members. Similarly, the case-studies in the three study areas and the telephone interviews contain many references to the development of members' self-confidence as a result of their experience of the organisation.

(viii) Learning through Social Interaction. In various interviews, members claimed to have 'learned about other people' as a result of membership. Of course, this is a nebulous claim and one might equally argue that one 'learns about other people' when shopping, visiting relatives or going to work. However, it can be argued that voluntary organisations provide a structure of roles and relationships which focuses activity and any learning which might be associated with it and functions as a source of stimulus and support while new ideas or situations are experienced.

The evidence that voluntary organisations of all kinds (whatever the intention with which members join) create new social networks, and provide new contexts for the making of friends, is very strong. In the South Cumbrian and Central Manchester member interviews (Table 18) almost every respondent said that they had 'made friends' as a result of joining. In the postal survey informants were virtually unanimous that friendships were formed in their organisation:

	Of how many members would you say the statement is true?			
Belonging to our organisation means that members . . .	**All** %	**Most** %	**Some** %	**None** %
Form new friendships abilities	32.7	38.3	28.2	0.9

In the Preston member interviews (n = 60) 42.9% of the responses to the question 'why did you come to the society?' related to friendship (Table 3).

It appears to be the case that in a voluntary organisation, to the extent that one learns, one gets to know one's fellow-learners, indeed one learns with friends. This is often (or even normally) not the case in formal adult education classes. That is what our informants told us: 'You get the opportunity to get to know people better [here]. You have more contact with people here' – natural history society compared with WEA. Does this matter? It probably does for the less confident and less able learner. And it seems to be a necessary pre-condition for a situation in which members share the role of teacher/instructor/apprentice-master and thus incur extra risks to their self-esteem. Furthermore, for voluntary organisations to function successfully, there is a necessity for members to relate satisfactorily to each other and to co-operate, to compromise and have regard for each other (although there was often evidence of friction and faction). In other words, as was noted in the particular instance of the Jewish Blind Society, members can learn to be 'clubbable'.

6.4 Comparisons with previous research

It may be useful to make a few comments on the extent to which the current research has made advances on previous research into learning in voluntary organisations. Obviously, it would be possible to write at length and to consider detail. This section, however, discusses only two pieces of work – Elsey's investigation of 20 voluntary organisations in Birkenhead[6,7] and the PIE project enquiries[2] in the North-West of England.

Elsey, in his analysis, emphasises 'the expressive functions' of voluntary organisations in a way which accords with the findings of this project. He writes that:

> *The assumption is that learning new things, practising acquired skills, meeting and interacting with others, sharing common interests, helping in the management process of voluntary organisations, taking on responsibilities, taking pride in work performed and feeling a sense of purpose in life through leisure activities and membership enable people to express personal needs and contribute to their self-development* (Elsey, 1975, p.93).

Elsey compares learning in voluntary organisations with learning in formal adult education programmes on four dimensions:

- subject matter
- organisation of learning situation
- nature of learning situation
- control over learning situation.

On the first two dimensions he concludes that 'voluntary organisations ... do not differ too much from the conventional adult education programme'. On the latter two dimensions he argues that learning 'is unlikely to be built on the assumption of learning in an organised sequence, moving to higher levels of complexity or forming a conceptual whole', and that 'there is less control over the learning situation, leaving to chance how learning takes place and how much is learnt' (Elsey, 1975, p.95).

What this study shows is that it is unsafe to generalise about voluntary organisations in the way in which Elsey does. His study is based on 20 organisations (mainly *SERVICE* and *INTEREST*) in one town. What seems to be necessary is that we recognise the heterogeneity of voluntary organisations and understand that they will differ not only in orientation (which will, in itself, make crucial differences), but also in the presence of predominance of, for example, formal teaching, training, assessment and certification, practice learning and apprenticeship learning.

Elsey is right to draw attention, as the present study does, to the expressive and affiliative functions of voluntary organisations. Learning over time, and with friends, seems to be a vital feature of voluntary organisation learning activity. However, there seems, in the end, to be some difficulty in combining for analytical purposes notions of, say, learning skills through practice with those of, say, learning 'to handle relationships' through experience. What is needed (and although the present study provides more differentiated examples than Elsey's, neither study achieves it) is more concrete and clear operationalisation: in different contexts and at different levels of what it is to learn and of how success and failure in learning can be recognised. When Elsey writes that 'there is a need for a method to show, firstly, that people do learn by informal means and that it is as effective as formal processes of learning' (Elsey, 1975, p.95) he is right but greatly oversimplifying. There is no 'it', but a whole range of as yet imperfectly understood processes.

The PIE project's conclusions on learning in voluntary organisations (and these were based on exclusive local and regional surveys and case-studies) now seem to be both unsystematic and also over-simplified. For example, the project team concluded that:

> *The project surveys contain hints and indications that in important ways voluntary organisations as educational agencies are functioning differently from, and attracting adult learners for different reasons from, the public education agencies* (Percy *et al*, 1983, p.78).

The problem with this conclusion is that, as this report shows, there appears to be a continuum between voluntary organisations and public education agencies which incorporates such dimensions as formal teaching, certificated learning and practice learning. Moreover, it seems unsafe to conclude that voluntary organisations are 'attracting adult learners' *per se*. They are not. They are attracting adults. Many of these adults – to a greater or lesser

degree unconsciously; to a greater or lesser degree incidentally – as a result of attendance at voluntary organisations engage in learning activity.

Similarly, the PIE project team concluded that:

> *It seems very likely that there are reasons why adults may prefer to learn in clubs and societies rather than in evening classes: they can be sure to avoid a 'school atmosphere', they will certainly be with people of similar interests whom they may have known for years, the teaching and learning relationship may be more 'democratic' and social* (Percy *et al., ibid.*).

However, it seems unlikely that people often make the rational choice between alternatives ('prefer to learn') which this conclusion implies. The problem with the conclusion is not that it is wrong in its own terms (although it reads as if based on a unitary model of the voluntary organisation as a local interest society with closely knit membership) but that it is making what is often a secondary function primary. Members of voluntary organisations join to 'do' something, not to learn.

Finally the PIE project team argued that:

> *The extent to which learning in voluntary organisations is non progressive, passive or ineffectual merits considerable attention* (Percy *et al.*, 1983, p.79).

This is still true. This investigation has been concerned with learning activity, not with learning outcomes. Nevertheless, because of the sheer quantity of data gathered, and because of the qualitative nature of the case-studies and the telephone interviews, it is possible to say that there is a gathering weight of evidence to confirm that in many voluntary organisations adults learn progessively, actively and effectively.

It may be of interest to ask to what extent voluntary organisations have changed since the time of the PIE project's fieldwork in 1979-1980. It will be recalled that the present study chose its three study areas from the five 'district studies' which the PIE project undertook.

In the responses to the current investigation's postal survey only 170 of the 523 organisations responded to the question of how long their organisation had been in existence. Fifty per cent of these respondents claimed to have existed for 20 years or more; only 24.1% to have been founded in the last 10 years. However, of those responding from Central Manchester, 60.3% were reported to have existed for less than 10 years. Most of the *COMMUNITY* and *SERVICE* organisations contacted by the project for the case-studies in Central Manchester had come into existence since the time of the PIE project fieldwork.

As an exercise, the list of 180 voluntary organisations in Preston which responded to a PIE project postal enquiry in 1980 was compared to the comprehensive list of 435 voluntary organisations which the UDACE project gathered together in June 1986. In other words these 180 voluntary organisations were known to exist in 1980 and were sufficiently active to

respond to a survey. Twenty five of the 180 organisations from 1980 (13.8%) were not on the UDACE project's list of 1986. There is no firm guarantee that the 1986 listing was as comprehensive as the original 1980 list. Nevertheless a wastage of 13.8% seems significantly large. Wastage seemed greatest with small *INTEREST* organisations and organisations on the margins between *ADVOCACY/COMMUNITY*.

6.5 Hypotheses

Earlier in the report it was mentioned that at the beginning of Phase 1 of the fieldwork, five informal hypotheses were developed from the relevant literature, from the work of the PIE project and from the project brief to guide the fieldwork. It is now time to return to these informal hypotheses and to consider them briefly as a conclusion to this work. These five hypotheses are now discussed in turn.

- 1. *In voluntary organisations adults, intentionally or not, do engage in significant learning activities.*

There is no doubt that this hypothesis is true, but, as it is put, it immediately requires expansion, differentiation and explanation. Voluntary organisations vary enormously and they differ greatly on this factor too, but we have argued consistently that the 'orientation' of an organisation will be some guide to the kind of formal learning activities to be observed in it. Organisations with a *SOCIAL* orientation, for example, will be less characterised than others by formal learning activities.

- 2. *Adults in voluntary organisations have negative attitudes to 'education' and 'learning' and do not include them in their 'definition of the situation'.*

We do not have a great deal of evidence from this project about adults' 'negative' attitudes to 'education' and 'learning'. This is partly because these adults indeed did not normally include the concepts in their 'definition of the situation' unless prompted to do so. When they did, those with experience of formal adult education normally saw different advantages in learning in either context. Learning in voluntary organisations might be more 'friendly', 'democratic', 'at your own pace', 'leaving you more to stand on your own feet', but in the formal sector you might learn 'more from experts', 'more quickly', 'all the basics'. It depended on what you wanted.

- 3. *Adults in voluntary organisations are members for reasons of social activity and personal development as well as interest in the objectives of the organisation.*

It is certainly true that adults join voluntary organisations for reasons of social activity and forming friendships, but there is little evidence in this investigation that they do so for reasons of 'personal development' (indeed, personal development may not be a prominent construct in the minds of

many). However, there is ample evidence that voluntary organisation activity of all kinds is, in fact, a vehicle for the personal development of members.

- 4. *Working class men and women, senior citizens and members of ethnic minority groups are more likely to engage in learning in voluntary organisations than in formal adult education.*

The project did not investigate this hypothesis closely. The postal survey asked for information upon the age of membership (17.2% of organisations were reported to have a membership mainly over 60 years) and, from the case studies, it is clear that many more elderly people are members of, or associated with, voluntary organisations than are to be found in adult education classes. However, that should not beg the question about 'learning' which is contained in the hypothesis and which was not closely examined in relation to elderly people.

Questions about social class and ethnic origin were excluded from the postal survey because it was judged that they would affect the response rate. The Preston case-studies did suggest that there was social class mix in certain societies, and other societies which were mainly working class. Much will depend upon the nature, orientation and context of the organisation.

There were certainly black adults as the organisers, members and users of some of the voluntary organisations contacted by the project in Central Manchester. But this topic merits a study of its own. We did not get the impression of many societies in which black and white mix.

- 5. *Problems of management, finance, accommodation, etc. inhibit adult learning in voluntary organisations.*

It is foolish to generalise in the face of a global hypothesis such as this. Certainly, the project came across many 'problems' of management, finance and accommodation, particularly in Central Manchester. To some extent voluntary organisations come and go, they have their up-turns and their down-turns, they acquire individual members for a time who are able treasurers, fund-raisers, managers and grant negotiators. Many *COMMUNITY* organisations wanted more grant aid, but they did not want strings attached. Many *INTEREST* organisations would have preferred better accommodation, but they did not want to have to suffer extra controls to have it.

It is probably true that, for example, public sector agencies could assist voluntary organisations over factors such as these (and thus, in a general sense, facilitate the adult learning that goes on in these organisations). But a crucial issue would be the extent to which such assistance could be given without detriment to the voluntary nature which governs their existence.

6.6 Voluntary-statutory relationships

In this final brief section we simply draw attention to one or two issues. They are not recommendations.

(i) CO-OPERATION BETWEEN VOLUNTARY-STATUTORY AGENCIES

Occasionally it was put to us that our research was 'dangerous'. The evidence we were gathering might be used either (a) to give statutory agencies more control over voluntary organisations, or (b) to provide a rationale for closing down much formal adult education on the grounds that 'the voluntary organisations do it already'.

Neither proposition is tenable if one looks at the evidence closely. The voluntary organisations are involved in a plethora of activity and only some of it overlaps with the formal adult education sector. Most of that which does overlap is carried out in ways and contexts that are dissimilar to those in formal adult education. It remains the case that an individual who wants a short, focused course of instruction is much more likely to find it with the formal providers.

The notion of statutory agencies 'controlling' voluntary organisations seems difficult to relate to practice, except in cases of the large *SERVICE* and *COMMUNITY* organisations. Basically, attempts at 'control' would drive members away: they would engage in voluntary activity elsewhere. However, there is substance to the fear that over-reliance on statutory providers for accommodation/equipment/finance can affect the spirit and dynamics of a voluntary organisation. Statutory providers need to be sensitive to this issue.

Thus, it is not sensible to describe the voluntary and statutory sectors as in competition in the area of adult learning activity. There is, in fact, every reason and opportunity for them to co-operate.

(ii) ACCOMMODATION, FINANCE, EQUIPMENT

We do not need to labour the point that – if the above caveats are kept in mind – there are many ways in which statutory agencies could assist local voluntary organisations over accommodation, finance, equipment and other factors. They have good reasons for doing so. We believe that social class and age cohort memberships of voluntary organisations are wider than those of adult education classes. We have shown the long list of the 'educational outcomes' which are claimed for activity in voluntary organisations (and the claims are probably stronger for the experience of being a volunteer, although we have not examined these separately). Clearly voluntary organisations can function side by side with the statutory agencies in contributing

to learning needs of adults in all the relevant domains – cognitive, psycho-motor and, particularly, affective – and any assistance which statutory providers can give them is appropriate.

(iii) PUBLICITY, INFORMATION, EDUCATION GUIDANCE

We do not see why statutory providers should not systematically, with all the relevant means at their disposal, give out information about local voluntary organisation activity. And we are not aware, in the general move towards the development of educational guidance services and educational shops over the last decade, that consideration has been given to including learning activity in voluntary organisations among the information and guidance options which are given to clients.

(iv) TRAINING

There probably are ways in which the training expertise of the statutory providers could be made available to voluntary organisations. 'Statutory providers' does not mean only the local education authority; the trainers of the local authority social services departments and the area health authorities are often more relevant to the needs of *SERVICE* voluntary organisations.

We mean here more than slotting the occasional paid employee of a voluntary organisation into a local authority staff development course. We mean tailor-made courses for the paid employees of voluntary organisations and for the training officers of voluntary organisations, whether paid or not. A 'course' can be distance learning-based and/or modularised. And there might be an uptake of courses or learning materials specially designed for committee members and office holders of voluntary organisations, if statutory providers were to make them available.

(v) ACCREDITATION

We pointed out the significant roles of training and assessment of performance in some voluntary organisations. Most of this assessment is internal to the organisation, conducted locally by senior members.

There is much current discussion about the accreditation of experiential learning as a means of widening access to formal educational opportunities. It seems self-evident that much of the internally assessed learning activity of some voluntary organisations is ready-made for inclusion in such discussions, *if voluntary organisations and their members wished it*. There seems to be room here for some national discussion.

(vi) OUTREACH

The differences between the inner-city environment of Central Manchester

and the voluntary activity there and the other project study areas has been emphasised in this report. Formal adult education, voluntary organisations and the sort of organisations that start off as statutory but become voluntary (or vice versa) appear to have equal difficulty in making impact in a hostile environment. We have no particular suggestions or remedies but only the thought that we were taking a partial view of the situation because we were looking at voluntary organisations. We wonder if the question of the extent of learning activity (formal, non-formal and informal) merits its own separate, but comprehensive, investigation of inner-city areas.

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The UDACE Development Group

UDACE has been working on voluntary–statutory relationships in the education of adults since 1985. This work has been steered by a Development Group with the following membership:

Barbara Saunders	*(Chairman) UDACE*
Ted Atter	*Hampshire Local Education Authority*
Harry Bower Ted Hartley	*Rotherham Local Education Authority*
Eddie Burch	*UDACE/Kent Local Education Authority*
Stephen Hopwood Marilyn Taylor Richard Gutch	*National Council for Voluntary Organisations*
Muriel Howells	*Mid-Glamorgan Local Education Authority*
John Hughes	*Workers' Educational Association*
Alan Short Hilary LeCheminant	*Department of Education and Science*
Roger Watkins Bob Mackenzie	*The Volunteer Centre*
Kathy Moon	*Leominster Marches Project*
Julian Roberts	*Manpower Services Commission*
Mark Todd	*Her Majesty's Inspectorate*
Leslie Turner	*National Federation of Community Organisations*
Kay Young	*Rural Voice*
Stephen McNair John O'Shea	*UDACE*

Other publications

In addition to this report, UDACE is also publishing the following materials on voluntary–statutory relationships:

Understanding Each Other

A discussion paper on voluntary–statutory relationships in the education of adults. Published April 1987. *Free*.

Working Together: Voluntary–Statutory collaboration and adult learning – the policy paper

Summarises the outcomes of the UDACE work in this field, makes the case for change, and includes recommendations to relevant agencies. Published April 1988. *Free*.

Frameworks for Collaboration

By Ted Hartley and Ron Edgar

A handbook on promoting voluntary–statutory collaboration in adult learning, based on the UDACE development projects in Luton, Salford, Rotherham and Worksop, and on the research commissioned from Warwick University into evaluation and accountability in voluntary–statutory relationships. For publication late 1988. *£4.00*.

Learning from Volunteering

By Giles Darvill, Elizabeth Perkins and Judith Unell

Report of the research into the learning experience of volunteers in a variety of voluntary and statutory organisations, conducted for UDACE by the Volunteer Centre in 1987. Published July 1988. *£5.00*.

Bulletins

Three Bulletins – to be published by NCVO during 1988/9. Each will include articles, interviews, etc. on voluntary or statutory issues arising from the project work.

UDACE

Learning in Voluntary Organisations

What is UDACE?

The Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education in England and Wales was created by the Secretary of State for Education and Science within the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

The Unit examines areas of possible development in the education of adults, recommends strategies for development and sponsors projects to encourage development.

The overall pattern of the Unit's activity is decided by a Steering Committee which usually works through small development groups of experienced practitioners to examine particular topics.

The Steering Committee gives priority in its work to topics where development

- **will improve access to learning opportunities for adults**
- **will contribute to the creation of a more coherent service of education for adults**
- **is likely to improve the quality of learning opportunities available to adults**

and, where initiatives by the Unit, including the publication of recommendations, guidelines or reports, or the sponsoring of investigations or projects are likely to lead to major improvements in the service.

Steering Committee Membership

Chairman Donald Grattan

Department of Education and Science
Gordon Etheridge John Steel HMI

Welsh Office Education Department
Haydn Evans

Manpower Services Commission
Tim Harris

Local Authority Associations
J Turnbull (ACC) Peter Lister (AMA) Dewi Jones (WJEC)

National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
Jonathan Brown Eddie Burch Barbara Marsh
Lydia Merrill Barbara Saunders Alan Tuckett

Co-opted
Ray Cowell Joan Green Lucia Jones Peter Shaw

Head of Unit Stephen McNair
Senior Development Officer Judy Alloway
Administrative Officer Sandra Silver

Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education